BBC

December 2014
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goodfood

Middle East

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Santa's sack The foodie lust list INSIDE!

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Healthy winter Nutritious recipes, diet tips

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- Christmas menu options
- Serve up an easy buffet
- Fabulous festive baking



PLUS

- **Perfect your pro skills:** James Martin's venison Wellington
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DOWNTOWN DUBAI

BBC goodfood Middle East

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Welcome!



Ah, it's that time of year! The number of times I've said that to people in the last few weeks… and by that I don't just mean a time for Christmas carols, fairy lights, festive gatherings, plenty of feasting, and general bonhomie (although there is that too!), but just an incredibly busy time for everyone.

There's a bursting-at-the-seams event calendar, social commitments, visitors in town, restaurant openings, and busy work schedules for all of us, I think. It's like entering the last leg of a marathon, and poof, before we know it, 2014 will be over. Can you believe it? I feel like this year seems to have whizzed by faster than any before it – although they do say that's a sign of ageing!

To help you get out of work mode and into festive, we've got all the inspiration you need within these pages – from the ultimate menu for Christmas, complete with the classics as well as modern options (*Your Festive feast*, p50), to beautiful bakes that are sure to steal the show (*Star bakes*, p74).

For many of us who are busier than ever at this time of year, sometimes we simply don't have the time to invest in cooking up a special feast. But that shouldn't mean you give up on entertaining. There are a number of niche catering companies here who specialise in offering high-quality, gourmet food in an intimate home environment, so getting your festive party catered doesn't have to mean boring banquets anymore! We've taken the hard work out of your hands, and reviewed three that are worth trying, so you can pick one that suits your needs (*Outsource it!* p100).

And if you're pressed for time, then you'll definitely want to turn to p24 to find our gift guide (*All I want for Christmas is…*) as it contains the definitive compilation of lust-worthy goodies for foodies, to get your festive shopping sorted. I'm planning on putting some very bright sticky notes on these pages and having the magazine lying around on my coffee table!

As the whirl of the silly season takes over, I also plan to make time to take stock, look back at the year that was, and focus on the things that matter. And there's no better way to do it than gathered around a festive table with family and good friends, sharing laughter, good cheer, and of course, good food.

Here's to making some amazing holiday memories this month, see you in the New Year!

Sudeshna

Editor's picks



I will be putting a particularly bright sticky note on this gift idea! P25



This Italian EVOO is fragrant and delicious, plus the bottle is a keeper too, p95



I really enjoyed discovering all that New Zealand has to offer, p108

BBC goodfood Middle East

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BBC goodfood Middle East

Meet our Editorial Panel

The exclusive group of experts who are part of the *BBC Good Food ME* family:



Uwe Micheel A veteran chef, Uwe has been cooking since he was 12, and in the interim 30 odd years, he has picked up numerous awards, and has been serving as President of the Emirates Culinary Guild since 1999. A member of several international chefs' groups, he is one of the UAE's most respected culinary personalities.



Alison Van Camp Nutritionist Alison has been promoting a holistic approach to good health through diet for the past five years, not only to private clients but also in the capacity of a recipe and nutritional consultant for various leading corporate brands and hotels. The Netherlands-based nutritionist has developed her own nutrition analysis system based on USDA nutrient values.



Danielle Nierenberg President of Food Tank, a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization-supported non-profit body focused on sustainable agriculture and food systems, Danielle is a world-renowned expert on food issues, and a widely published and quoted personality. Qualified in Agriculture, Food, and Environment from Tufts University, New York-based Danielle aims to build a global network to promote safe, healthy eating.



Michael Kitts The Director of Culinary Arts at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management has hung up his chef's whites, wearing which he had spent over 20 years working at various leading establishments in London and won numerous accolades, to turn mentor and teacher to young aspirants of the hospitality industry in the UAE's leading training centre.



Marta Yanci Founder of bespoke catering company Marta's Kitchen, and more recently, a boutique cafe in JLT, Marta's workshop, Marta is a self-taught chef who took her passion for good food and turned it into a career five years ago. Now a recognised face on the UAE culinary circuit, the former lawyer has appeared on TV in Dubai and her home country, Spain.



Andy Campbell A Scottish celebrity chef who now calls Dubai home, Andy has trained at Westminster College, and previously worked at various restaurants, including Michelin-starred ones, and also ran his own restaurant in London, before moving here to work as a private chef for exclusive events. He currently also consults with Arabian Health Care in Ras al Khaimah.

Menu planner

Whip up a delicious meal with recipes from this issue

Vegetarian Boxing day lunch



Starter

Serve this **Easy risotto with chilli & mint crumbs** in smaller portions, p30



Main course

Enjoy meat-free festive flavours with a **Chestnut spinach en croute**, p55



Side

A classic salad is given a unique twist – **Spinach & squash salad**, p69



Dessert

The **Spiced stollen plait** can be made ahead, and will be enjoyed by all, p79

Behind the scenes

Take a look at what the ***BBC Good Food ME*** team members got up to this month!



Odilaine Mejorada indulged to her heart's content trying out a new Friday brunch

Nicola Monteath went on a discovery tour of Dubai's historic spice souk

Sampling just-caught mussels was only one of Sudeshna Ghosh's culinary adventures in New Zealand

Your say

We love to hear from you!



NEW FLAVOURS

During the colder months, we love cooking outdoors and usually do barbecues the same way we have always done. But now that I've come across a selection of new recipes for the grill (*Fire up the BBQ,* November 2014), I can't wait to try it all out soon. I did try the smokey mushroom, and seafood pineapple burgers, and loved the new, interesting flavours – my family really enjoyed it as well! Thank you *BBC Good Food ME,* as you always inspire me.
Dounia Taha

ON THE MUST-DO LIST

After reading up about hotels serving progressive dinners, I have convinced my girlfriends we need to try out one. We've actually decided to do an Abu Dhabi getaway, so the one at Jumeirah at Etihad Towers Abu Dhabi is perfect! Can't wait to indulge, and have a night out with the girls. Thank you!
Stacey Vini

PICNIC DELIGHTS

I love *BBC Good Food ME,* and always find recipes that I enjoy cooking and find useful in each issue. I loved your November issue, the cover looked so inviting, and just perfect for this season. My friends and I love going to the beach or park for a picnic, as soon as the temperatures drop. I recreated the menu in *Posh picnic for two* in your November issue at our last picnic, and all my friends now want the recipes. I also really enjoyed reading Wolfgang Puck's interview, and am looking forward to trying the homemade rubs (*Rub it in!*) at our next BBQ.
Sharon Merwin



FUSS-FREE COOKING MADE EASY

There's nothing better than a one-pot meal – it's super easy to cook, and all you have to do is literally dunk all the ingredients into one pot. A few friends of mine came over unexpectedly a few weeks ago, and were staying over for dinner, so I made the slow-cooked lamb with onions and thyme (*Easy one-pots*, November 2014). The meat was incredibly tender, and the herbs added just the right amount of aroma and flavour. If anyone does try it at home, I suggest eating it with crisp garlic bread!
Edwin Dennis



Win!

The winner of the Star Letter gets a **Staub Fondue set,** worth **Dhs850** from **Tavola**. Who doesn't love dunking fresh strawberries, melon and marshmallows into chocolate, or perhaps meat and pickles into a hot cheese fondue? This set is ideal for that, and allows you indulge in fondue, wherever you like. Tavola is the leading retailer of European products and essential items for the kitchen, and sells bake ware, tableware and cookware from premium brands such as Mauviel, Le Creuset and Zwilling. The stores are all over UAE, Qatar, and across the GCC.



Star Letter

NUTRITION GURU

Dubai is a haven for food lovers, but unfortunately it is also a cradle for junk food of all sorts. With multiple initiatives being organised by the government and other institutions to raise awareness on healthy living, the scenario is slowly but surely getting better. In this context, the November issue of *BBC Good Food ME* covered a feature (*Eat to beat Diabetes*) which I strongly believe is a must-read for all parents and meal-makers. Highlighting the issue of Diabetes and providing crucial tips for healthier cooking, the feature is a gem of wisdom, especially for parents like me. I usually refer to the magazine for easy recipes and restaurant reviews, but this feature is a game-changer from your team, and I highly appreciate the information you are imparting to your readers. May you successfully develop more such valid stories that will help your readers change their lives for better.
Jayan Varghese



From our social media pages

- Any chance we could look at some low-carbohydrate, high fat recipes in the future? – *Dominique Smalberger*
- The bagel recipe, along with others, were truly awesome! Food, food, and food all over the magazine, keeps me hungry BBC Good Food ME – *Poonam Gupta*
- The magazine cover looks so tempting – waiting to receive my copy. – *Ralph Joudet*

TALK TO US!

Email us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com with your thoughts and comments, and send us your photos with your copy of BBC Good Food ME!

You can also connect with us on social media!
Find us on:

@bbcgoodfoodmiddleeast **@bbcgoodfoodme**

Or, you could write to us at:
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Grosvenor Business Tower, Tecom, Office 804
PO Box 13700, Dubai, UAE.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs: SUPPLIED, PHOTOS.COM

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Our recipe descriptions

V Suitable for vegetarians
❄ You can freeze it
Not suitable for freezing
Easy Simple recipes even beginners can make
A little effort These require a bit more skill and confidence – such as making pastry
More of a challenge Recipes aimed at experienced cooks
Low fat 12g or less per portion
Low cal 500 calories or less per main.
Superhealthy Low in saturated fat, 5g or less per portion; low in salt, 1.5g or less; and at least one of the following: provides one-third or more of your daily requirement of fibre, iron, calcium, folic acid and/or vitamin C, or counts at least one portion of your recommended 5-a-day fruit and veg.
Good for you Low in saturated fat, low in salt.
Heart healthy Low in saturated fat, with 5g or less, and low in salt, with 1.5g or less, and high in omega-3 fatty acids
1 of 5-a-day The number of portions of fruit and/or veg contained in a serving
Vit C **Iron** **Omega-3** **Calcium** **Folate** **Fibre**
Indicating recipes that are good sources of useful nutrients
GLUTEN FREE Indicates a recipe is free from gluten

Some recipes contain pork & alcohol. These are clearly marked and are for non-Muslims only. Look for these symbols:
P Contains pork
Contains alcohol

Store Directory

Contact numbers for outlets featured in this issue

2XL Furniture: 04-2888071
Ace: 04-3411906
Al Ghandi Electronics: 04-2570007
Biorganic: 04-4433535
Bloomingdale's-Dubai: 04-3505333
Cities: 04-3434301
Crate and Barrel: 04-3990125
Danube: 04-2667699
Fortnum and Mason: 04-3882627
Harvey Nichol's Dubai: 04-4098888
Homes R Us: 04-4469820
Ikea: 04-2037555/02-4935888
Indigo Living: 04-3466934
Jashanmal stores: 04-3471715/02-6456454
Lakeland: 04-3236081
Nespresso: 04-3928181
Pierre Herme: 04-5520387
Sauce Gifts: 04-3883488
Silica: 04-2525614
Tavola: 04-3402933
Valleydez: 04-3212896
Villeroy and Boch: 04-3399676
Virgin Megastore: 04-3414353
The One: 04-3955889
TWG Tea Salon and Boutique: 04-3253857

Note: Prices in Qatari Riyals are approximately the same as UAE Dirhams.

Foodie file

What's hot and happening in the culinary world, here and around the globe.



Boca



Asia Asia

DINE IN THE CITY

FOUR FAB NEW RESTAURANTS TO CHECK OUT

✳ Rhodes W1, the new restaurant from celebrity chef Gary Rhodes has opened at Grosvenor House Dubai. The British restaurant, bar and terrace offers a modern twist to British fare in a casual, upscale setting and features dishes like Irish stew broth, braised oxtails with creamy mashed potatoes, and lemon curd and clotted cream mousse with warm mini cones and strawberries for dessert. Call 04-3176000.



✳ French, Italian and Spanish dishes are prepared in sharing-style platters at Boca, the all-new Mediterranean concept at DIFC. The restaurant boasts a cold-food station where seafood and oysters are served from, cocktail bar, a wine-cellar – with a private table – and a terrace. Try the succulent beef sliders, rabbit terrine, and zucchini pasta, along with innovative cocktails. Call 04-3231833.

✳ Asia Asia has joined the culinary offerings at Pier 7, and we couldn't be happier. The restaurant takes its inspiration from the age-old Spice Route which includes Sri Lanka, India, the Persian Gulf, Europe, Far East and Australia, with dishes featuring Persian-style black cod, sambal chicken tagine, and Australian flank with harissa butter among others. Call 04-2765900.

✳ Popular meat destination The Rib Room has opened a new outpost in Jumeirah Zabeel Saray. The moody, sophisticated atmosphere has been recreated here, in a much larger space – complete with outdoor terrace – but the menu is all its own; think delicious steaks of course, as well as quality ingredient-led dishes such as Welsh lamb and organic chicken. Call 04-4530444.





Big savings

Who doesn't like saving big bucks when dining out, shopping, or on health and beauty treatments? We've been fans of The Entertainer for a while now, so are pretty excited about the launch of their 2015 apps and books. Visit the website (theentertainerme.com) and get 20 per cent off if you place your order before December 31. Plus, you don't have to wait until next year to use it!

SMART START-UP



Wouldn't it be amazing if you could have a nutritionist with you at all times? You might be able to, in the form of an app called EatWell, which could be the next big thing for foodies – if the founders receive funds. The free app created by three university students from Netherlands helps you improve your health and lifestyle, monitor the nutritional value of your meals, and track your progress, with as little effort and cost as possible. Sounds interesting? Visit EatWell App – Eating Healthy Made Easy on kickstarter.com to find out more and donate funds.

"A home cook who relies too much on a recipe is sort of like a pilot who reads the plane's instruction manual while flying."

– Celebrity chef Alton Brown



A new hotspot is coming to town, and we are the first ones to give you a sneak preview. The H Hotel is set to bring a popular contemporary American restaurant brand to Dubai in early 2015, offering smart casual US West Coast-style cuisine, focusing on high quality ingredients. Watch this space for more details!

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



A sky full of food

Imagine what Dubai's skyline would look like, if it were made with food? Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing have commissioned an art installation, so it won't be long before visitors to the World Travel Market in London – taking place in February - get to see the food model. Trying to picture it? Paul Baker, the food sculptor, designer and model maker behind the installation, has made the Dubai World Trade Centre of milk and white chocolate bars, while Atlantis The Palm is made of thin Italian crackers, green flat pasta, and French batons for the palm island structure.

This just in:



'Tis the season for hearty, slow cooked suppers! The Tefal Clipso + Precision pressure cooker is ideal for slow-cooked meats, stewing, simmering, browning and steaming food. Make everything from pasta to roasted potatoes and spreads in just 10-15 minutes! Dhs849 at leading supermarkets.

Minimum waste, maximum taste

A chef in Brighton, UK, has opened the first zero-waste restaurant, Silo, to combat the appalling increase in food wastage in the country. The chef only serves six dishes every day – made from locally grown, seasonal produce – and has a compost machine for unused food scraps. Isn't that smart and eco-friendly?

What's trending



#festivefood
We can't wait for Christmas to come around, and it looks like we aren't the only ones! On Twitter, Food writer and Chef Jessica Collins posted a picture and recipe of cranberry sauce, while coffee brands are tweeting about their festive drinks that have launched for the season. Restaurants all over the world, and recipe channels like Food Network, are also tweeting their recipes and menus to try on the day.

Home

Calling all aspiring chefs!



The International Centre for Culinary Arts has launched an annual Dhs1 million scholarship award for 30 young chefs from under-privileged backgrounds. Bringing together the who's who of the region's culinary world, as mentors and supporters of the initiative, the scholarship is being offered to junior chefs working in the UAE's hotels and restaurants, in partnership with Emirates Culinary Guild, World Chefs (World Associate of Chefs Societies) and City and Guilds London. The young chefs will be chosen by a panel of judges, and will go through an intensive training program for 52 weeks, where they will train under industry experts to be eligible for the WACS Certified Professional Cook, under the World Chefs Global Certification Scheme. Visit iccadubai.ae.



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Aisle file

Gorgeous gourmet buys, kitchen gear, home décor and more.



Line up your patio with several of **SMALL WHITE LANTERNS**, the next time you host a party – and watch your home turn into a magical fairyland. Dhs29 at **HOMES R US**.



This **OLE JENSEN YELLOW COLANDER** is a great buy, as it works as a serving bowl too. Use it to drain pasta, or to serve up a salad. Dhs239 at **WAMLI.COM**.



Canapés will look oh-so-delicious when served in this glamorous gold **PHILO DISH**. Dhs249 at **THE ONE**.



Try this **FATMA HAND MOULD** to create Arabic-style shaped cakes. Dhs145 at **SAUCE GIFTS**.

Store your back issues of *BBC Good Food ME* in this stylish, functional **KANAYA MAGAZINE RACK**, to add a pop of colour to your home. Dhs3,152 at **CITIES**.





Get your morning boost of caffeine with this **BIALETTI MUSA RESTYLING ESPRESSO MAKER** – it makes four cups. Dhs235 at **TAVOLA**.



Bring out these **SAN DIEGO JUICE STEM TUMBLERS** at your next dinner party, to add colour to your table setting. Dhs49 for a set of six at **SILICA**.



Become a cocktail pro with this **ICE SMASHER KIT** to add crushed ice to your favourite drinks anytime! Dhs139 at **CRATE AND BARREL**.



The weather is perfect for alfresco dining, so why not invest in a lovely **OUTDOOR SEATING SET** like this one? It's ideal for large gatherings. Dhs7,169 at **DANUBE HOME**.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH, SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED



Here to help

Our expert chef Marta Yanci, founder of bespoke catering company Marta's Kitchen, offers practical advice to tackle all your cooking dilemmas.



Q Why is it that when I bake cookies they always come out too hard? Is there a trick for them to be chewy?

A. Aside from using a good cookie recipe and following the instructions and ingredient quantities, I find it is important to take the cookies out of the oven when you find they are still slightly raw. Bear in mind cookies will continue cooking out of the oven with the internal heat they have. What may have been happening is that by the time they cool down, they have overcooked and are too crispy. It is also very important to ensure they cool down on a rack, to allow proper air flow so the cooling process is faster.

Q How do I make slow cooked mutton without a pressure cooker or slow cooker, but achieve the same results?

A. Use your oven. If you set the right temperature and hydrate the mutton, the result will be amazing. Preheat the oven at 120C and allow about 6 hours for a 2.5kg leg of mutton. Check every hour and add some stock or sauce to get the desired texture and results.



Q I've decided to cook duck for my festive spread this year. What's the best way to cook it?

A. Great idea! Duck is a good source of protein and essential amino acids. It's also rich in vitamin B and zinc, however it has a thick layer of fat – remove the fat if you are health conscious. The best way to cook duck is with the skin on. Place the duck, skin down, on a hot pan with no oil or butter. Cook for about 10 minutes, or until golden. Turn it over and cook for another 2-3 minutes. You can also finish it in the oven at 200C, once you have browned the skin in the pan. Ideally duck should not be eaten well done, as, with all poultry, it tends to become dry.

Q I'll be making mince pies for the first time this Christmas. Do you have any handy tips to make sure I don't burn the base?

A. When baking, be it mince pies or anything else, it is important to ensure the temperature of the oven is right. Ideally, you should bake at 180C. It is also important that the tray doesn't sit on the bottom of the oven, if you have an oven that doesn't heat all around. Another good trick, if you don't want to burn the base, is to place the baking tray or container on a tray filled with water.

Q My children don't like a mix of sweet and savoury food in one dish. Could you please suggest an alternative to cranberry sauce for roast turkey?

A. Your kids aren't the only ones! In fact, this is a common problem that has an easy solution. I would suggest preparing a nice gravy or even just having a selection of good quality mustards, so that they can help themselves to it.



Q I always find sautéed prawns become hard and rubbery after a while – how do I prevent this from happening?

A. When prawns become rubbery, it is most likely because they are overcooked. When you eat them as part of a curry or a pasta, you won't notice them because they keep moist. However, if you just sauté and overcook them in the process, you are removing all the water the prawn holds, and this gives the rubbery feel. When sautéing prawns, wait for it to change colour, and then remove from the pan immediately. This cooks the prawns, but keeps it from becoming dry and rubbery.

Ingredient of the month

Citrus fruits are in season right now, and like all citrus fruits, clementine is rich in vitamin C and fibre. Have it raw, as a juice, or as a sauce for roast. Make sure you don't use the zest, as it's quite bitter.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs PHOTOS.COM



GLAZE GLORY

Lurpak® Cooking Mist is your trusted companion for a crisp, golden finish when glazing and basting. The blend of Lurpak® butter and vegetable oil gives even coverage without the fuss. Try it also for greasing pans and tins, or on top of cooked vegetables, pasta and rice.

/LurpakArabia

On test: Kitchen gadgets

We review some of the latest appliances on the market.

Lakeland electric pie maker



It's that time of year, when even those who don't bake regularly, like to give it a go! This gadget is the ultimate kitchen countertop machine, if you love pies. The compact pie-maker is not dissimilar to a sandwich toaster, and the best part is, the pies are ready in just 10-15 minutes, which makes it great for a quick lunch, supper or snack – provided you have the ingredients ready.

What we liked: For years, we've been baking mince pies in the oven – the wait period being at least 20-25 minutes. But once you have your dough and filling ready, all you need to do is cut out the dough circles with the pastry cutter that's included with the gadget, place it in the four pie holes, fill it with your favourite ingredients, and close the pie with another piece of dough on top – it's that simple! When the green indicator light comes on, it's ready. We made a beef and mushroom filling, to fill into the pies, and the outcome was pretty decent – similar to the pies you get at cafés. When it came down to the taste test, we think it was up to mark, as it was slightly crisp on the outside, but soft on the inside.

To buy: Dhs250 at Lakeland.

Breville BRC600 Multi Chef

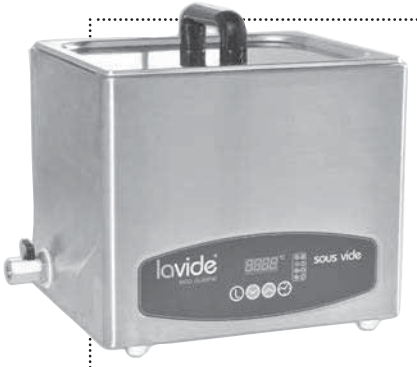
Who doesn't love an all-in-one appliance to cook everything from rice and risotto to steamed vegetables and meat? This appliance doubles up as a slow cooker, and is a great addition to any kitchen arsenal. It features a non-stick cooking bowl, stainless steel steaming tray and serving spoons.

What we liked: The Multi Chef is well-designed with instructions and settings that are easy to use, including risotto making, and sauté and steam functions. The power cord is detachable, so you can serve directly from the Multi Chef at the table, making it incredibly convenient, and great for anyone who isn't fond of washing multiple dishes. Every function worked well, and the best part is it keeps food warm automatically for up to five hours, after it's cooked. Cooking with this isn't rocket science, as all you have to do is add your ingredients, and choose the function or setting you prefer. The supplied recipes vary from chicken risotto with pesto, to sushi rolls, all of which are easy to understand. If you are a fan of one-pot meals, then it's a great one to have!

What we didn't like: The provided rice scoop is not a standard metric measuring cup. Despite the unstated implication that you can use multi-cooking techniques at the same time, you can't. The main question to work out is really whether you actually need this – dedicated rice cookers are cheap in this market, and bamboo steaming baskets fit easily on a normal saucepan.

To buy: Dhs539 at select Spinneys and Waitrose outlets.





Lavide Select LV.80 sous vide machine

Cooking sous-vide has been the exclusive preserve of professional chefs for a long time, but of late, it is entering the realm of home cooks as well, with the appliances becoming smaller and more affordable. Sous vide cooking is essentially nothing but a water bath, that slow-cooks the ingredient at a low temperature for a long time, to seal in all the taste and nutrients, while keeping it incomparably tender.

What we liked: Just the fact that home cooks now have an option of cooking sous vide is a bonus in itself! This table-top gadget looks a bit like an oversized toaster, and operationally is quite simple – turn it on, choose the desired temperature, then wait for it to gradually heat up before dropping in your uncooked food – in a vacuum sealed bag. That is the operative phrase here, however, a sous vide machine is pointless without a professional-grade vacuum sealing appliance as well. Luckily, you can also buy that from the same brand – the Lava vacuum sealer is a flat, long contraption with lots of space-craft like dials and buttons, but again, is very straightforward, and risk-free to use; it also comes with food-grade plastic bags of different sizes to use for the ingredients.

Our first attempt at using it was to make sous vide teriyaki chicken. We deliberately kept the chicken breasts quite large and thick, to test the tenderness quotient. After about 90 minutes of cooking, it is recommended that the meat is lightly seared either by blow-torch or on the grill, just to add a bit of caramelisation. The results were incredible – the meat was tender even in its thickest part, and full of flavour. Other proteins also produced similar results, making it quite useful for meat-centric meals. The precision levels for temperature aren't spot on in this model – for example, if you select 60C, it can fluctuate between up to 62-63C – but that doesn't really make any difference to a dish, in an average home kitchen scenario.

What we didn't like: The pricing is quite high, naturally, and the fact that one has to invest in not one, but two gadgets simultaneously, means this is only suitable for really keen cooks who will get enough use out of it, and plan on using it regularly, for a variety of dishes.

To buy: Dhs3,295 for the sous vide machine, Dhs3,145 for the vacuum sealer at vauxxia-shop.com.

Reviews by DAVE REEDER, NICOLA MONTEATH AND SUDESHNA GHOSH


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Cook fearlessly with Lurpak® Cooking Liquid. The Lurpak® butter gives a delicious taste and a golden finish, while the vegetable oil prevents burning. Great for pan frying meat, fish, vegetables and rice dishes. Also works wonders for roasting, greasing tins and even baking.
/LurpakArabia

The Doha diaries

Our Doha-based columnist has her finger on the pulse of the city's foodie scene.

A very Doha holiday season!

Usually at this time of year I flee the jurisdiction – for sometimes warmer but usually colder climes. I choose to take myself away from the festive action. I'm not good at Christmas – I don't like mince pies and Santa mildly terrifies me.

This year, because of a variety of commitments, I am staying put and I have been forced to enter into the Doha festive cheer, and I have to say, I may be in a mind to change my views.

Last month my Doha family – which constitutes a mini United Nations – celebrated the American tradition of Thanksgiving. Being Australian and having grown up on a steady stream of US shows including Dallas and others I don't like to admit watching, I kind of knew what to expect. That is turkey and lots of 'sides', including something absolutely terrifying called green bean casserole. I believe it's made from soup mix, onions and of course green beans. I didn't ask the method. We ordered our turkey from a local American-style restaurant – it was deep fried to perfection and juicy inside.

This made me really appreciate my mother's efforts every festive season. We are a small family – just the three of us – but relatives come from far and wide for my mother's cooking. She would start working a week ahead, sourcing seafood, cooking meats, planning the salads and putting Dad to work in the garden. All this in Sydney's sweltering summer.

Back in Doha, not wanting to seem like the foreigner in the room and channeling my mother, I decided to make my own contribution to the event. I decided on a Thanksgiving cheese plate. Not just any cheese plate – the cheese was arranged in the shape of a turkey. I'm just going to let you visualise that for yourselves, but it involved several hours of construction, pepperjack cheese, cheddar, Gouda, skewers and some very creative knife skills. There was also a lot of cursing, so much so that one of my neighbors knocked on my door to check I wasn't being raided. It's fair to say, I got into the spirit!

This year, presents (real presents, not gift certificates!) have been ordered online for my people back in Sydney, a luxe hotel buffet has been booked for a group of my friends, Secret Santa assignments made… I even made it to a Tree Lighting Ceremony. After the festivities, I will be returning to work almost immediately. That's the thing about the holiday season in this part of the world. While there are plenty of opportunities to get into the spirit of the season, it isn't really a 'holiday' season if you barely get a day off work. But, when you've got fried turkey, all-singing-all-dancing (literally, in some cases!) festive buffet spreads, and an international set of friends who are like family, who's complaining?

- Rachel Morris is a Qatar-based writer and food blogger (lifeonthewedge.net).



Festive offer highlights from the city's restaurants.



Market by Jean-Georges, W Doha

Celebrate Christmas Eve with a four-course menu and jazz tunes. The festive menu features parsnip soup, roasted seabass with sweet potato ravioli, caramelised beef tenderloin, and s'mores with graham cracker ice cream for dessert. *December 24 for QR295 per person. Call +974 4453 5135.*

Sky Lounge, Oryx Rotana Doha

Planning a Christmas meal at home? Keep things simple and order a whole roasted turkey or beef with trimmings like roast potatoes, vegetables, gravy, cranberry sauce, apple sauce, and stuffing from this international restaurant. *From QR590 for a 5kg turkey (serves ten) and QR940 for beef (serves ten). Call +974 4402 3333.*



Ipanema, Marriott Marquis City Center Doha Hotel

Gather your family and friends, get dressed in white and gold, and dance to tunes from the Brazilian Band, Brazuqa, before enjoying a selection of succulent, sizzling meats served right to the table. *On December 31, from QR395 per person, call +974 4419 6100.*

Kempinski Residences and Suites Doha

Before you tackle a festive meal, try a cooking class with Executive chef Vonon Yergu, and learn how to prepare a three-course set menu. You can take home the chef's secret recipe and ingredients for the dessert too. *On December 3, 10 and 17. QR225 per person, call +974 4405 3325*

Three Sixty, The Torch Doha

Celebrate the first day of the year in this revolving restaurant, with a set menu showcasing grilled medallions of Angus beef tenderloin with vegetable mimosa, and a wide variety of seafood. *On January 1, QR140 per person. Call +974 4446 5600.*

Additional text NICOLA MONTEATH | Photos SUPPLIED


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Take on cakes, sweets and pastries with
Lurpak® Baking by your side. The ideal blend of butter and
vegetable oil gives a softer texture ready to mix straight
from the fridge. It easily folds into cake
mixtures and gives a light, fluffy golden finish.
/LurpakArabia

Tried & tasted

Each month, we review two of the city's top tables.

Alfresco dining



#foodart #alfresco fun #icecreamlollipop

Where: 40 Kong, H Dubai
What's it like: Better known as one of Dubai's hottest nightspots in the alfresco season – getting in after 11pm on a weekend is well nigh impossible – but beyond the glamorous rooftop setting (it's located on the 40th floor), stellar sound system, trendy vibe and heaving crowds, there is a really good kitchen that is now offering a newly revamped menu. An international menu, but with distinct Japanese influences, there's everything from sashimi and teriyaki skewers, to goat's cheese wontons (very moreish!) and sliders, as well as innovative cocktails on offer.

Our meal started with a bowl of edamame – warm and tossed through with rock salt; almost without noticing, we polished them off! But that only whetted our appetite for the yellowfin tuna sashimi – which, served with a delicate apple and celery guacamole, and flavoured through with lime, was beautiful – that we had for starters, along with a healthy option, the quinoa salad, with pomegranates and feta cheese and a thyme mustard dressing.

Next, I tucked into the succulent and flavourful Australian lamb rack, served with red pepper dip and baby shallots, while my partner enjoyed the grilled corn-fed chicken breast with parmesan vegetable roulade. Paired with a peanut curry sauce, it made for a very interesting main. The side of homemade potato wedges with truffles and parmesan that we shared, however, was the highlight of the meal for both of us – there's nothing quite like potatoes done really well, is there?!

We were truly stuffed by this stage of the evening (and so was the venue) so dessert was a shared platter of ice cream bon bons – fondant-coated mini scoops of four different flavours of ice cream and sorbet, served like lollipops on bed of ice; this definitely won on the presentation front.

Already boasting enviable views over the glittering Dubai skyline, service that strikes just the right balance between friendliness and professionalism, and vibe-y atmosphere, this creditable menu completes the mix for the venue.

Best for: A glam night out with friends

If you want to go: Around Dhs550 for dinner for two, drinks prices start from about Dhs50. Call 04-3558896.

- Sudeshna Ghosh



#ilovetartare #chunkysalmon

Where: Riva Ristorante
What's it like: Before heading to this beach club and restaurant, my friend and I didn't expect to be dining by a beautifully-lit pool, surrounded by lanterns and date palms, a thatched beach bar, spacious cabanas all around, and stunning views of the Burj Al Arab in the distance.

With Palm Jumeirah residents walking their dogs or catching up with friends over a drink, and children playing with their scooters, this really feels like your friendly neighbourhood casual eatery. Inside, the restaurant boasts a Mediterranean vibe, with white-washed walls and leather couches, and large wooden tables, while the outdoor terrace features rattan dining tables and chairs, fairy lights thrown over bushes, and cabanas by the bar – it's a no-brainer we chose to sit outside.

To start with, we chose bruschetta with juicy tomatoes and olives, salmon tartare, and eggplant parmigiana. All dishes were served in generous portions, good for two, and the salmon tartare had large meaty chunks of the fish, with a slight hint of citrus and herbs. We love a parmigiana that's oozing with cheese and this one ticked all the boxes! For mains, you can add your own pizza toppings to a Margherita – I chose pepperoni, bressaola, capers, tomatoes, chilli, and buffalo mozzarella, and it arrived as a rectangular-shaped pizza on a brown wooden platter. It was freshly baked, cheesy, filling, and definitely something I would order again. My dining partner chose the truffle and parmesan spaghetti – you can choose the pasta of your choice –and it had a distinct truffle aroma, but wasn't anything out of the ordinary. We shared a hot chocolate fondant for dessert – the perfect way to beat the winter chill!

If you want to go: Dhs250 for two (without drinks). Call 04-4309466.

- Nicola Monteath

Best for: Relaxed family evening



Photographs SUPPLIED and by REVIEWER



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Flavours of the month

Our pick of the best festive offers, and restaurant promotions this season.



Christmas offerings

Horizon, Amwaj Rotana, Jumeirah Beach Residence

You and your loved one can tuck into traditional dishes like roast with trimmings, as well as a selection of other treats, to bring in Christmas in style. *On December 24, from Dhs199 per person. Call 04-4282000.*

Blue Marlin Ibiza UAE

If you prefer spending Christmas by the beach, with a bunch of friends, you'll love this brunch which features specialties like oysters, tuna sashimi salad, soft shell crab tempura with spicy mayonnaise, roasted chestnut crêpe prepared at a live cooking station, and a selection of classic desserts including Bûche de Noel.
On December 25, Dhs295 per person, call 056-1133400.

Bā Restaurant and Lounge, Fairmont The Palm

Enjoy Christmas Eve at this Asian restaurant with signature cocktails, and a set menu featuring steamed prawn dumplings with truffle oil, braised pumpkin soup with seafood, crispy fried fish with wasabi mayonnaise, and turkey spring rolls, among other offerings.
On December 24, Dhs388 per person. Call 04-4573338.

Sultan Lounge, Jumeirah Zabeel Saray

Try out the Festive Afternoon Tea which features an extensive selection of coffee and tea, as well as a variety of treats and sandwiches that are sure to put you in the festive spirit. The tea is served on the terrace, and is accompanied by live Bousouka tunes.
Available daily, until December31, Dhs175 per person, and 50 per cent off for children below 12. Call 04-4530444.

Tong Thai, JW Marriott Marquis Dubai

Christmas with a Thai twist? You can try it out at this award-winning restaurant which will be offering a festive three-course set menu on the occasion – including turkey with Thai influences.
On December 24, 25 and 26, Dhs250 per person. Call 04-4143000.

Armani/Ristorante, Armani Hotel Dubai

If you prefer something other than roast turkey this year, try the gourmet six-course degustation menu featuring dishes like black ink squid tagliolini with king crab, line-caught sea bass, and pigeon with amaretto and confit onion. For desserts, tuck into chocolate soufflé with bitter orange ice cream.
From December 20-26, from Dhs800 per person. Call 04-8883001.



Amalfi, Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi

This Christmas Eve, enjoy a sumptuous Italian four-course set menu of veal cappuccino with black olives dust, and pan seared scallops in cacao butter sun choke chips, homemade ravioli, 48-hour braised Wagyu Osso Buco with truffle, and a trilogy of chocolate for dessert. Each guest gets to take home a panettone as well!
On December 25, from Dhs299 per person. Call 800101101.



Gaucho, DIFC

Try out an Argentinian Christmas menu this year, featuring dishes like sticky mulled figs with goat's cheese and toasted walnuts, prawn Marie Rose spoons, and chicken liver parfait on toast. Follow this with mince pie empanadas, chorizo stuffing balls with cinnamon, star anise and orange, and smoked salmon with citrus cream cheese. For desserts, try the fruit cake with chocolate truffle and white ganache centre.
Available until December 31. À la carte menu prices, call 04-4227898. >>

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED


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PREPARE
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Cook your way to new frontiers with pre-measured
Lurpak® Butter Blocks. Ready-to-use portions make measuring
easier and their small size means they soften quicker.
Knead them into pastry, swirl them into sauces
or conquer the art of puffy things.
/LurpakArabia

Boxing day dos



A.O.C French Brasserie, Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach

Once you recover from your Christmas Day festivities, head to this restaurant to enjoy a French-inspired buffet featuring everything from mezze to sushi and seafood. Children get to tuck into their own child-sized buffet as well.

On December 26, from Dhs230 per person. Call 04-4484733.

Mezzerie, The Waldorf Astoria Palm Jumeirah

Enjoy the widespread Boxing Day brunch which features ultimate classics like the Waldorf salad, eggs benedict with poached lobster, and traditional roast – a great way to spend the day after Christmas!

On December 26, from Dhs345 per person. Call 04-8182222.

New year celebrations



Mazina, The Address Dubai Marina

Gather your family and bid farewell to the year with an extravagant New Year's Eve spread featuring live cooking stations for Asian dishes, a meat and cheese counter, freshly baked bread, and traditional turkey with trimmings. You can also enjoy the fireworks at rooftop lounge Blends.

On December 31, Dhs650 per person (including entrance to Blends). Call 04-8883444.



Bushman's Restaurant and Bar, Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort and Spa

Bring in the New Year with a five-course set menu featuring mouthwatering Australian specialties. Live entertainment sets the mood for the evening, while the cheese and dessert offerings in the dedicated room provide the perfect end to a lavish meal.

On December 31, from Dhs2,015 per person. Call 04-5678304.

Aspen by Kempinski, Kempinski Mall of the Emirates

Treat your loved one to a Gala Dinner on New Year's Eve, which includes a mouthwatering six-course set menu, live entertainment, and access to the terrace to watch the Dubai skyline light up with fireworks.

On December 31, from Dhs745 per person, Call 04-4095999.

Boardwalk, Dubai Creek Golf and Yacht Club

The Silver New Year's Eve Ball is the place to head to if you want to enjoy good music and a delicious five-course set menu on New Year's Eve, with the family.

From Dhs550 per person, call 04-2956000.

Café Belge, The Ritz-Carlton DIFC

Put on your eye-masks and gear up for the masquerade-themed evening which features a five-course Belgian menu. Duck consommé, butter poached dover sole and chocolate candied orange cake are on the menu.

On December 31, Dhs780 per person. Call 04-3722323.

Cu-ba, Jumeirah Creekside Hotel

Dance into the New Year with Latin tunes at the rooftop terrace of this hotel. A mini tapas buffet is on offer, to accompany the cocktails. You will also get a great view of the firework display from up here.

From Dhs500 per person, call 04-2308582.

The St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort

Put on your finest attire and bring in 2015 with The Gala Dinner at the Regal ballroom of the resort. Dance to tunes from the eight-piece band and tuck into delicious treats from the buffet, before heading to the sea view terrace to watch the firework display. A dedicated area is available for children as well.

On December 31, from Dhs1,300 per person. Call 02-4988888.



West 14th, Palm Jumeirah

Ring in the New Year at this New York-style eatery, with a selection of appetisers, mains like Wagyu beef striploin and pan seared sea bass, and desserts. To top it off, watch the stunning firework display from the outdoor Marina Bar – which also overlooks the sea and beach – while listening to classic jazz tunes.
On December 31, Dhs650 per person.
Call 04-4477601.

Origins, Yas Viceroy Abu Dhabi

Kick-start the New Year with a widespread buffet chockfull of treats from a number of cuisines – it's the best way to sit back and indulge on the first day of the year.
On January 1, from Dhs195 per person. Call 02-6560600.

Nine7One, The Oberoi, Dubai

Get together family and friends for the New Year's Day barbecue featuring everything from yakitori and charcoal grills to tandoor and shawarma.
On January 1, from Dhs450 per person, call 04-4441407.

Turkey takeaways

With plenty of hotels and restaurants offering a full meal with all the trimming to enjoy at home, hosting a festive gathering has never been easier! Here's a selection of some you can try:

Sheraton Dubai, Mall of the Emirates Hotel

Leave your turkey preparation to the pros, and order your oven-roasted stuffed turkey along with all-time favourite trimmings like Brussel sprouts, roasted potatoes, gravy and cranberry sauce.
From December 15-31, prices start at Dhs549 (5kg). Call 04-3772353.

Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi

Place your orders here for smoked or Oakwood honey coriander cured salmon, roasted rib eye beef, and whole roasted turkey and trimmings. You can also buy festive stollen, chocolate truffles and pralines.
From December 10-23, prices start at Dhs750 (6kgs), call 02-6907999.



The Ajman Palace Hotel

Get your festive turkey stuffed with chestnuts, and all the traditional trimmings including chipolatas, gravy and Brussel sprouts, at this hotel.
From December 1-24, prices start at Dhs199 (3kgs), call 06-7018888.

Gazebo lobby lounge, Al Bustan Rotana

Enjoy a stress-free festive season by ordering slow roasted whole turkey with sage stuffing, steamed vegetables, homemade cranberry sauce and various other trimmings. Log cakes, cookies and chocolates are also on offer.
From December 6-January 7, prices start at Dhs700 (serves 8-10). Call 04-3211111.

What else is on through the month?



New on the menu!

Koi Restaurant and Lounge at The Collection, Saadiyat Island, have introduced new dishes. Sautéed sea scallops and crispy gnocchi starter, grain fed Wagyu strip loin for mains, and tofu sesame and mint chocolate are some to try.
Call 02-6783334.

Bigger and better

We Love!

Pierchic at Al Qasr, Madinat Jumeirah, has opened its doors after a major makeover. It now includes over-water pods where you can enjoy innovative cocktails, a seafood bar and lounge, and fishing net crystal chandeliers which ooze sophistication. Try dishes like the Loch Fynn diver scallop with vanilla and bergamot butter, baked organic salmon with red pepper sauce, and a creative mille-feuille of chocolate.
Call 04-3666730.

Flavours of Italy

Biella at Wafi has introduced a new menu featuring authentic specialties like Carre di Agnello (marinated lamb rack), and Costoletta di Vitello (char-grilled veal chop with creamy mashed potatoesand), among other options.
Call 04-3244100.

Casual brunch

We Love!

The BubbleOrange brunch at C.Taste restaurant, Centro Barsha, is perfect for a relaxed Friday, when you're not blowing the budget. All dishes are created in hues of orange, with tasty starters like spicy Thai beef noodles salad, and orange citrus quinoa. À la carte options are available for mains and you can indulge in dishes like a delicious crusty pistachio salmon with white garlic sauce. Treat yourself to a wide selection of desserts to end the meal.
Every Friday, from Dhs115 per person,
Call 04-7040000.

All I want for Christmas is...

Whether you use it for inspiration when you're gift shopping, or to drop hints to your significant other, this festive gift guide will make any foodie's wishes come true!



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH, SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs: SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK

The Practical Stuff

Appliances, cookbooks, accessories, and all the other things you will use in your kitchen for years to come.



CAST-IRON FONDUE POT, DHS179 AT CRATE AND BARREL





COUVERTS A SALADE SALAD SERVERS, DHS550 AT COMPTOIR102

CANDLE HOLDER, DHS45 AT HOMES R US





SNÖFINT PLACE MAT IN RED, DHS19 AT IKEA



JUNIPER BOOKS THREE VOLUME COOKBOOK SET, DHS606 AT MODA OPERANDI



ORCHID PLATE HOLDER, DHS169 AT 2XL



CUTIPOL 24-PIECE GOLD PLATED CUTLERY SET, DHS1,600 AT BLOOMINGDALE'S HOME

RANA RD 103-PIECE DINNER SET, DHS1,389 AT SILICA





OSLO RED TEAPOT, DHS69 AT INDIGO LIVING



NESPRESSO LATTISIMA PRO, DHS2,450 AT NESPRESSO BOUTIQUES



KITCHENAID ARTISAN CORDLESS HAND BLENDER WITH ACCESSORIES, DHS1,495 AT AL GHANDI ELECTRONICS

DOLOMITIPLUS INDUCTION NON-STICK CASSEROLE PAN, DHS79 AT HOME CENTRE



BATELA WOODEN COASTERS, DHS186 AT CITIES



CAMPFIRE POPCORN MAKER, DHS159 AT CRATE AND BARREL

Luxurious Treats

Everyone needs a bit of indulgence in their life!



SMALL SILVER MELON JAR, DHS4,260 AT MODA OPERANDI



MACARONS, DHS380 FOR 20PCS AT PIERRE HERMÉ



THE 19INCH FROST FAYRE HAMPER, DHS1,455 AT FORTNUM AND MASON



ARTECNICA CANDLE HOLDER, DHS790 AT SAUCE GIFTS



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD TEA SET, DHS520 AT TWG TEA SALON AND BOUTIQUE



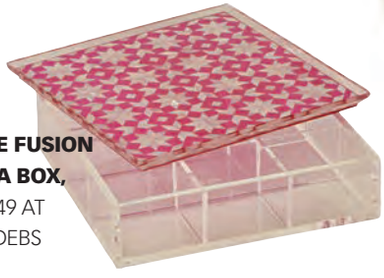
ALFI JUG, DHS1,900 AT GALLERIES LAFAYETE



MISS ETOILE TEA POT AND TEA CUP, DHS260 AT SAUCE GIFTS



DIPTYQUE HIVER CANDLE, DHS320 AT HARVEY NICHOLS-DUBAI



HANDMADE FUSION PLEXI TEA BOX, DHS2,649 AT NADA DEBS



CIDES MILANO TRAVELING WINE BOX SET, DHS10,650 AT MODA OPERANDI



NOSTALGIC LANTERN, DHS417 AT VILLEROY AND BOCH



RICE RED ROSE NAVY BORDER PLATE, DHS250 AT VALLEYDEZ

Little Things

Stocking fillers and thoughtful trinkets that are as useful as they are gorgeous.



CARNIVAL BOWL, DHS39 AT INDIGO LIVING



TARTUFI AL CAPPUCCINO (MILK CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES WITH HAZELNUTS AND CAPPUCCINO) JAR, DHS75 AT CARLUCCIO'S



LOG CABINET COOKIE JAR, DHS139 AT CRATE AND BARREL



WINTER BAKERY ORNAMENT CAKE POP GIFT BOX, DHS85 AT VILLEROY AND BOCH



RINGBOW JAR, DHS29 AT THE ONE



VOLUSPA 3-WICK CANDLE IN DECORATIVE TIN, DHS119 AT BLOOMINGDALE'S HOME



GINGERBREAD FOLK SILICONE ICING MOULD, DHS30 AT LAKELAND



ROUND BASKET, DHS29 AT HOMES R US



SANTA MUG, DHS17 AT HOME CENTRE



KITCHEN CRAFT FROTHER, DHS39 AT JASHANMAL STORES



MISTY BUTTERFLY NAPKIN RING, DHS25 AT THE ONE

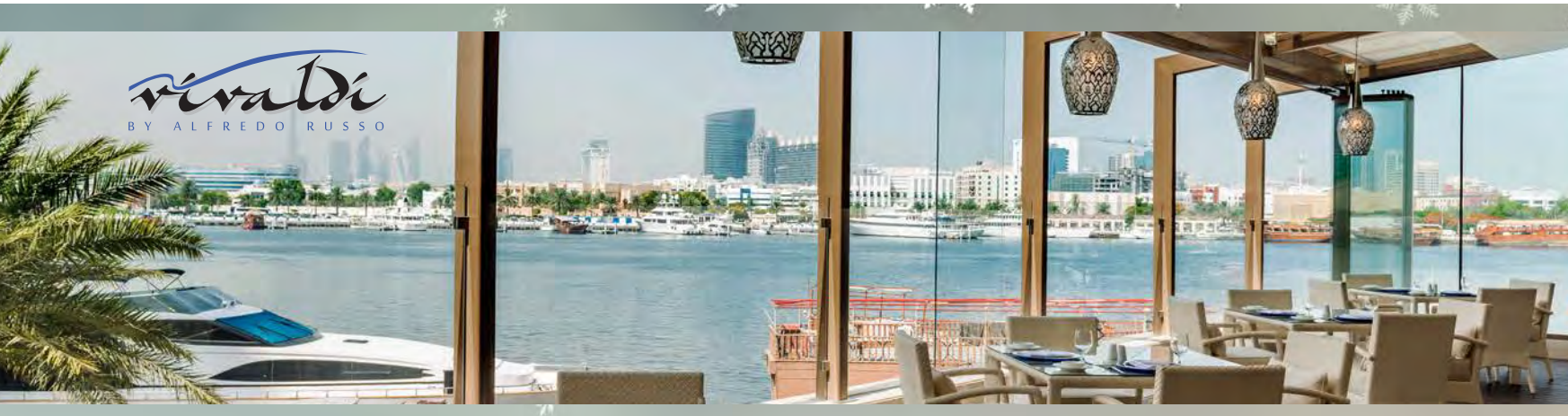
POCKOS EXPRESSO CUP IN GIFT BOX, DHS99 AT VIRGIN MEGASTORE



GET IN THE MOOD
for the festive season
WITH A BRUNCH

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Home Cooking

Inspiring recipes for easy everyday meals and stylish weekend entertaining

IN THIS SECTION



✳ Speedy family suppers, that are tasty too! **P30**



✳ Nutrition-packed meals to beat the winter blues, **P35**



✳ An easy, Asian-inspired buffet menu for the festive season, **P67**

Gingerbread Bûche de Noël, recipe p80

Make it tonight

Fast, fresh family suppers that everyone will love!

Photographs ROB STREETER



Easy peasy risotto with chilli & mint crumbs

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 45 MINS Easy V Low fat Calcium Folate Fibre Vit C Iron 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

1 tbsp vegetable oil, plus a drizzle
1 onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, crushed
200g risotto rice
1l hot chicken or vegetable stock
300g frozen peas
25g Italian-style hard cheese (pecorino, Parmesan or vegetarian alternative), grated
Juice and zest of 1 lemon
2 slices of leftover bread (a few days old is best)
2 frozen red chillies (deseeded if you don't like it too hot)
Small bunch of mint, chopped

1 Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the onion and cook for 5 mins, then add the garlic. Stir in the rice for 1-2 mins, then add the stock, a little at a time, stirring continuously until the rice is nearly cooked and the stock has all been absorbed – this will take about 20 mins. Meanwhile, tip the peas into a colander and run under the hot water tap until defrosted. Drain well, tip into a bowl and roughly mash with a potato masher.

2 Remove the risotto from the heat, stir in the peas, cheese and a squeeze of lemon juice, then season well.

3 Grate the bread on a box grater into chunky crumbs. On the finer side of the grater, grate the chilli. Heat a drizzle of oil in a frying pan, add the chilli, lemon zest and crumbs and cook for 2 mins until crispy, then add the mint and sprinkle over the risotto before serving.

PER SERVING 747 kcals, protein 39g, carbs 108g, fat 14g, sat fat 4g, fibre 16g, sugar 10g, salt 1.8g

TIP The chillies are easier to grate from frozen and will keep in the freezer for months!

Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling REBECCA NEWPORT

Sweet chilli tofu with pineapple stir-fried noodles

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy V Vit C 2 of 5-a-day

250g egg noodles
400g firm tofu
4 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
4 tbsp soy sauce
540g canned pineapple pieces in juice, drained but keep the juice
1 tbsp vegetable oil
8 spring onions, finely sliced (keep the green parts separate)
250g frozen sliced mixed peppers

1 Pour boiling water over the noodles and set aside to soften for 15 mins. Cut the tofu in half through the centre to make 2 thinner pieces, then in half the other way to make 4 rectangles, and in half on the diagonal to make 8 triangles. In a frying pan, mix the chilli sauce, 2 tbsp soy and 3 tbsp pineapple juice. Add the tofu and cook until the sauce is thick and sticky, turning the tofu halfway through cooking. Tip into a serving dish with any sauce and keep warm.
2 Drain the noodles. Heat the oil in the pan, add the peppers and the white parts of the spring onions and and fry for 8-10 mins until the peppers have defrosted and softened. Add the pineapple, noodles and remaining soy sauce, then toss together and heat through. Serve with the tofu, scattered with the green parts of the spring onions.

PER SERVING 512 kcals, protein 23g, carbs 63g, fat 18g, sat fat 3g, fibre 6g, sugar 20g, salt 2.7g





Smoked mackerel chowder with hedgehog garlic bread

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy

Calcium Folate Fibre Omega-3 1 of 5-a-day

4 garlic cloves, crushed
50g butter, plus a large knob for the chowder, softened
1 small round loaf of bread
1 tsp vegetable oil, for cooking
4 celery sticks, finely chopped, plus a few leaves to serve
1 onion, finely chopped
3 tbsp plain flour
600ml whole milk
2 large potatoes, cut into cubes
200g pack smoked peppered mackerel, flaked
200g frozen sweetcorn

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Mash the garlic with 50g butter. Slice the bread first one way, then the other (in a hedgehog pattern), but do not cut all the way through. Stuff the crevices with garlic butter, then wrap loosely in foil, leaving the top open to crisp, and bake for 20 mins while you make the chowder.
2 Heat a knob of butter in a saucepan with the oil. Tip in the celery and onion, cook for 5 mins or until soft, then add the flour and mix to a paste. Pour in the milk, a little at a time, and cook until smooth and the consistency of double cream. Add the potatoes and half the mackerel, cover and simmer for 15 mins until the potatoes are cooked.
3 Flake the remaining mackerel, add to the chowder with the sweetcorn and simmer for 1-2 mins until the sweetcorn is cooked. Splash in a little water if it is too thick. Ladle into bowls, scatter over the celery leaves and serve with the bread for dunking.

PER SERVING 838 kcals, protein 30g, carbs 95g, fat 36g, sat fat 15g, fibre 7g, sugar 14g, salt 2.7g >>



Aubergine katsu curry

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 45 MINS Easy V Fibre Iron 3 of 5-a-day

4 tbsp plain flour
2 aubergines, sliced into 0.5cm/½in discs
100g dried breadcrumbs (see right for how to make your own to save money)
4 tbsp vegetable oil
250g basmati rice
1 large onion, finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, crushed
3 tbsp curry powder
2 tbsp clear honey
400ml can coconut milk
1 large cucumber

1 In a large bowl, combine 3 tbsp flour and enough water to make a runny paste, then season and add the aubergines, tossing until they are all coated. Tip the breadcrumbs onto a plate and dip in each aubergine slice, turning to coat and pressing down to help the crumbs stick.

2 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Heat a drizzle of oil in a frying pan. Cook the aubergine slices in batches for 5 mins each side or until tender, adding a little more oil between batches. Transfer the slices to a baking tray as you go. Once all the aubergine slices are browned, place the tray in the oven and cook for 10-15 mins while you make the sauce. Cook the rice following pack instructions.
3 Wipe out the pan and heat another drizzle of oil. Add the onion and cook for a few mins to soften. Stir in the garlic and curry powder for 1 min, then add the remaining 1 tbsp flour and the honey, and stir to a paste. Splash in the coconut milk, a little at a time, stirring to make a smooth sauce, then simmer over a low heat for 10 mins, adding a splash of water if it gets too thick. Peel the cucumber into long strips with a peeler. Drain the rice and serve with the crispy aubergine slices, curry sauce and cucumber ribbons.

PER SERVING 786 kcals, protein 15g, carbs 105g, fat 32g, sat fat 17g, fibre 11g, sugar 20g, salt 0.3g

D-I-Y dried breadcrumbs

Heat oven to 140C/120C fan. Grate stale bread on the coarse side of a grater, then spread the crumbs in a thin layer over a baking tray. Bake for 30 mins, mixing halfway through cooking. Cool completely, then store in a sealed container for up to 2 weeks.



Bombay lamb wraps

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 50 MINS Easy Folate Fibre Vit C Iron 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 large red onion, chopped
3 fat garlic cloves, crushed
200g frozen lamb mince
3 tbsp curry paste (we used tikka)
400g can chopped tomatoes
2 large potatoes, cut into 2cm cubes
250g frozen peas
8 flour wraps or chapatis, warmed
140g natural yoghurt

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onion and cook for a few mins to soften. Add the garlic, stir for 1 min, then add the frozen mince. Cook until defrosted and nicely browned, then stir in the curry paste, tomatoes, potatoes and half a can of water. Season well, then cover with a lid and simmer for 20 mins or until the potatoes are nearly cooked.
2 Remove the lid and simmer for a further 10-15 mins until the liquid has reduced and the sauce clings to the potatoes and mince. Add the peas, stir through until defrosted, then serve with the warm wraps and yoghurt.

PER SERVING 576 kcals, protein 26g, carbs 80g, fat 15g, sat fat 4g, fibre 11g, sugar 12g, salt 1.3g

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Merry Christmas!
& Happy New Year

Christmas is a special time and there is no better way than spending it at the Bonnington. Enjoy the festivities and quality time with family and friends, and let us take care of everything. This festive season, we invite you to take a well-deserved break in the luxurious surroundings of our family-owned 5-star hotel.



Christmas Eve - Spend Christmas Eve at the Cavendish Restaurant and savour a five course Christmas menu for only **AED 255** per person, or treat yourself and include an expertly paired glass of grape beverage with every course for only **AED 499** per person.

Christmas Day - Join our traditional Christmas Day Family Brunch - it is an institution! Children under 6 years old dine free and under 12 years old are only **AED 220** per person. Adults can select from our various packages: Food and soft drinks option for **AED 440** per person, or the unlimited food & house beverages option for only **AED 550** per person. There is even an unlimited French bubbly option for only **AED 650** per person. We shall entertain the kids while you brunch. There might even be a visit from Santa...!



New Year's Eve Gala Night - See out 2014 in style and sail into 2015 in glamorous surroundings! Join us for our New Year's Eve Gala Night and for only **AED 699** per person receive a welcome drink in our Authors' Lounge followed by a five course gala dinner in our Cavendish Restaurant. Every course is expertly paired with fine grape beverage and at midnight, you can toast to the New Year with a complimentary glass of French bubbly on Healey's Terrace.

New Year's Day Breakfast - Celebrate the start of the New Year in the elegant and comfortable surroundings of The Cavendish Restaurant. Relax and unwind from the night before and enjoy the New Year's Day gourmet buffet breakfast offered at **AED 110** per person.

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The Spanish way



In the third and final part of a three-part series, Alvaro Roa, Sous Chef at Salero Tapas and Bodega, Kempinski Hotel Mall of the Emirates, gives lamb a Spanish touch.



Cordero confitado (Garlic lamb confit with potatoes)

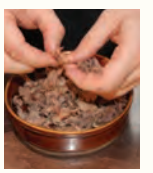
SERVES 4 | PREP 13 HRS | COOK 3 HRS Easy

1kg whole lamb or lamb shank on the bone
500ml olive oil
500ml vegetable oil
5 bay leaves
10 black peppercorns
1 garlic head
3 shallots
10 cherry tomatoes, roasted
100ml demi-glace or brown sauce
Handful of parsley, chopped
200g potato cubes, fried

1 Put the lamb in the pot with all the spices and the oils, and bring to boil on a low temperature – around 120 degrees – for 2 hrs. Shred the meat and remove all the bones (Step 1).
2 Place in a flat container and press the meat down with another container (Step 2). Refrigerate for 12 hrs for it to set.
3 Remove and cut into the shape you prefer (Step 3). Heat in the oven at 180C for 20 mins.
4 Serve with the roasted tomatoes, brown sauce, parsley and fried potato cubes.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1 **Shred the meat to small thin pieces. Do this when the meat is hot, so that the gelatin from the bones and skin helps the meat stick together.**



2 **Place the meat in a small container, and press it down with another container by putting weight on it.**



3 **Shape the meat by slicing off the edges to form a rectangle or square piece of meat.**



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Healthy winter cooking

New nutritious meals that will see you through the colder months. Recipes LUCY NETHERTON
Photographs ROB STREETER



Boost your vit C

Sticky seeded salmon with satsuma salad

SERVES 2 PREP 10 MINS
COOK 15 MINS Easy

Folate | Vit C | Omega-3 | 2 of 5-a-day | Gluten Free

2 skinless salmon fillets, about 140g each
2 tsp agave syrup or honey
2-3 tbsp mixed seeds
FOR THE SALAD
4 satsumas
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
50g bag watercress
250g pack cooked beetroot (not in vinegar), drained and cut into thin wedges

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Brush each salmon fillet with half the agave syrup or honey, sprinkle on some black pepper, then press on the seeds. Transfer to a baking tray and bake for about 15 mins, depending on the thickness of the fish, until the fish is cooked through and the seeds crunchy.
2 Meanwhile, cut the peel from the satsumas and cut into segments, reserving all the juice that comes out for the dressing. Whisk the juice with the olive oil, vinegar and some seasoning in a small bowl.
3 Toss together the watercress, beetroot and satsuma segments with the dressing and divide between plates. Add a piece of salmon to each one.

PER SERVING 473 kcals, protein 35g, carbs 20g, fat 28g, sat fat 5g, fibre 5g, sugar 18g, salt 0.5g >>

Food styling IULIA AZZARELLO | Styling SUE ROWLANDS

Chicken, kale & sprout stir-fry

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy Low cal Low fat Folate Vit C 2 of 5-a-day

The chicken isn't the star of this zingy stir-fry, so leave it out if you're going meat free.

100g soba noodles
100g shredded curly kale
2 tsp sesame oil
2 lean chicken breasts, skin removed and sliced into thin strips
25g piece fresh ginger, peeled and sliced into matchsticks
1 red pepper, deseeded and thinly sliced
Handful of Brussels sprouts, cut into quarters
1 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
2 tbsp vinegar
Zest and juice of 1 lime

1 Cook the noodles following pack instructions, then drain and set aside. Meanwhile, heat a large wok or frying pan and add the kale along with a good splash of water and cook for 1-2 mins until wilted, with a little bite remaining, then cool under running water to keep the colour.
2 Add half the oil and cook the chicken strips until browned, then remove and set aside. Heat the remaining oil and fry the ginger, pepper and sprouts until softened a little. Return the chicken and kale and add the noodles.
3 Tip in the soy, rice wine and lime zest and juice along with enough water to create a sauce that clings to the ingredients. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING 381 kcals, protein 36g, carbs 50g, fat 6g, sat fat 1g, fibre 5g, sugar 7g, salt 2.1g

MAKE IT

Gluten Free

Check that your soba noodles are made from 100% buckwheat or use rice noodles, and swap the soy sauce for tamari.

Immune-boosting supper



Moroccan pomegranate & roast veg salad

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy V Low cal Low fat Folate Fibre Vit C 4 of 5-a-day Gluten Free

2 small sweet potatoes, cut into chunks
2 red onions, roots kept intact, cut into wedges
1 large parsnip, peeled and chopped into chunks
2 large carrots, peeled and chopped into chunks
1 tbsp ras el hanout
1 tbsp olive oil
100g bag baby spinach
110g pack pomegranate seeds
50g light feta, crumbled
4 tbsp Sherry vinegar

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan, line a large baking tray with baking parchment. In a large bowl, toss together all the veg with the ras el hanout, olive oil, salt and pepper. Arrange in a single layer on the baking tray. Roast, turning once, for 40 mins until tender and starting to char.
2 Once cooked, allow to cool for 10 mins then toss with the spinach leaves, pomegranate seeds, feta and vinegar.

PER SERVING 407 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 63g, fat 11g, sat fat 4g, fibre 14g, sugar 39g, salt 1.0g

Packed with veg





Lemon & pepper mackerel pasta

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy Folate Fibre Vit C Omega-3

300g wholemeal pasta shapes
2 leeks, thinly sliced
150ml low-sodium chicken or vegetable stock
Zest and juice 1 lemon, plus extra wedges to serve, optional
220g mackerel fillets, steam cooked
140g half-fat crème fraîche
Small bunch of parsley, chopped

1 Cook the pasta in lots of boiling water following pack instructions. Meanwhile, cook the leeks in the stock until really soft. Add the lemon zest and juice, fish, crème fraîche and parsley and take the pan off the heat.
2 Drain the pasta, holding back a little of the cooking water, then add pasta to the pan. Mix well and season with lots of black pepper, then add a little of the cooking water if it looks a bit thick.
3 Divide between four bowls and serve immediately with extra lemon, if you like.

PER SERVING 471 kcals, protein 26g, carbs 51g, fat 18g, sat fat 6g, fibre 9g, sugar 5g, salt 0.6g

Beef & bean chilli bowl with chipotle yoghurt

SERVES 4 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 45 MINS Easy Fibre 3 of 5-a-day Good for you

If you're vegetarian, swap the beef for an extra can of beans and use a vegetable stock cube.

1 tsp olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
250g pack extra-lean minced beef
1 tbsp chipotle paste, plus a little extra to serve
1 tbsp Cajun seasoning mix
800g canned mixed bean salad, drained
400g can chopped tomatoes
1 low-sodium beef stock cube
2 squares 70% cocoa dark chocolate
Small pack of coriander, chopped
Cooked brown rice and low-fat Greek yoghurt, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a frying pan and cook the onion on a medium heat until softened. Add the beef with some black pepper and a little salt, breaking up any lumps with a wooden spoon, and cook until browned. Add the chipotle and Cajun seasoning. Give it a good stir and cook for 1 min more.
2 Tip in the beans and tomatoes, then crumble over the stock cube. Add a can of water and simmer for about 20-30 mins, until thickened. Add the chocolate, and stir until melted, then add most of the coriander.
3 Serve the chilli in bowls on top of the rice sprinkled with the rest of the coriander, with a dollop of low-fat yoghurt, and an extra drizzle of chipotle paste on top.

PER SERVING 372 kcals, protein 28g, carbs 26g, fat 13g, sat fat 5g, fibre 9g, sugar 9g, salt 1.3g GF



Nice & slow

When you want something you can pop in the oven and forget about for a while, these recipes are ideal!

Boston baked beans

SERVES 6 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS SOAKING ● COOK 2-2½ HRS Easy ❄ P

500g pack dried haricot beans
2 onions, roughly chopped
2 celery sticks, roughly chopped
2 carrots, roughly chopped
2 tbsp Dijon mustard
2 tbsp light muscovado sugar
½ tbsp black treacle or molasses
2 tbsp tomato purée
800g piece belly pork (can be swapped for veal)
Handful of parsley, roughly chopped

1 Soak the beans in a large bowl of cold water for at least 4 hrs or overnight. Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Drain and rinse the beans and put in a large flameproof casserole with 1.5 litres water. Boil for 10 mins, skimming off any scum that appears on the surface.
2 Add the onion, celery, carrot, Dijon mustard, sugar, treacle or molasses and tomato purée. Stir until everything is well mixed, then bury the piece of pork in among the beans. Cover tightly and cook in the oven for 2-2½ hrs until the beans and pork are very tender. Check halfway through the cooking time and top up with hot water if necessary.
3 Take the pork out of the pot. Cut into large chunks and serve with the beans, sprinkled with parsley.

PER SERVING 615 kcals, protein 43g, carbs 54g, fat 27g, sat fat 10g, fibre 16g, sugar 14g, salt 0.8g





Fruity lamb tagine

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS PLUS MARINATING ● COOK 1½ HRS Easy

2 tbsp olive oil
500g lean diced lamb
1 large onion, roughly chopped
2 large carrots, quartered lengthways and cut into chunks
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 tbsp ras el hanout spice mix
400g can chopped tomatoes
400g can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
200g dried apricots
600ml chicken stock
TO SERVE
120g pack pomegranate seeds
2 large handfuls of coriander, roughly chopped

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Heat the oil in a casserole and brown the lamb on all sides. Scoop the lamb out onto a plate, then add the onion and carrots and cook for 2-3 mins until golden. Add the garlic and cook for 1 min more. Stir in the spices and tomatoes, and season. Tip the lamb back in with the chickpeas and apricots. Pour over the stock, stir and bring to a simmer. Cover the dish and place in the oven for 1 hr.
2 If the lamb is still a little tough, give it 20 mins more until tender. When ready, leave it to rest so it's not piping hot, then serve scattered with pomegranate and herbs, with couscous or rice alongside.
PER SERVING 497 kcals, protein 40g, carbs 46g, fat 18g, sat fat 5g, fibre 12g, sugar 32g, salt 1.37g

Turn to p92 to learn how to make your own ras el hanout spice mix.

Beef & stout with carrots

SERVES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 3 HRS Easy

2 tbsp vegetable oil
1kg stewing beef, cut into large chunks
1 onion, roughly chopped
10 carrots, cut into large chunks
2 tbsp plain flour
500ml stout
1 beef stock cube
Pinch of caster sugar
3 bay leaves
1 large thyme sprig

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Heat the oil in large lidded casserole dish, brown the meat really well in batches, then set aside. Add the onion and carrots to the dish, give them a good browning, then scatter over the flour and stir. Tip the meat and any juices back into the dish and give it all a good stir. Pour over the stout and crumble in the stock cube. Season the stew with salt, pepper and a pinch of sugar. Tuck in the herbs and bring everything to a slow simmer.
2 Cover with a lid and place in the oven for about 2½ hrs until the meat is really tender. *The stew can now be chilled and frozen for up to 3 months – defrost completely before reheating until piping hot.* Leave the stew to settle a little, then serve with mash.
PER SERVING 562 kcals, protein 58g, carbs 26g, fat 23g, sat fat 8g, fibre 6g, sugar 20g, salt 1.5g >>





Lamb casserole

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 40 MINS Easy

1 tbsp vegetable oil
500g stewing lamb, cubed
1 onion, thickly sliced
2 carrots, thickly sliced
2 leeks, thickly sliced
400ml hot chicken or vegetable stock
1 tsp dried rosemary or 1 fresh sprig
400g can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
Crusty bread or boiled potatoes, to serve (optional)

1 Heat the oil in a large casserole. Tip in the lamb and cook for 5 mins until any liquid has disappeared, then add the onion, carrots and leeks. Cook for 5 mins more, stirring often, until the veg is starting to soften.
2 Pour over the stock, add the rosemary, cover with a lid and cook over a low heat for 1 hr. Stir in the beans and cook for 30 mins more, topping up with water if necessary, until the lamb is tender and cooked through. Serve with some crusty bread, if you like.

PER SERVING 397 kcals, protein 38g, carbs 19g, fat 20g, sat fat 8g, fibre 6g, sugar 8g, salt 1.15g



Chicken & bacon stew

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1½ HRS Easy

3 tbsp olive oil
16 chicken pieces on the bone (about 3kg in total)
140g smoked bacon, chopped (can be swapped for turkey bacon)
4 medium carrots, thickly sliced
2 onions, roughly chopped
2 tbsp plain flour
1 tbsp tomato purée
75ml white wine or cider vinegar
1l chicken stock
2 bay leaves
4 tbsp double cream or crème fraîche
600g small new potatoes, halved
12 large white mushrooms, quartered
Chopped herbs, such as parsley, tarragon or chives

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Heat the oil in a large flameproof casserole with a lid. Fry the chicken pieces in batches for 5 mins on each side until well browned, then transfer to a plate. Sizzle the bacon for a few mins until beginning to crisp. Stir in the carrots and onions, then cook for 5 mins until starting to soften. Stir in the flour and tomato purée and cook for 1 min more. Finally, splash in the vinegar and stir well.
2 Pour in the stock and bring to a simmer. Add the bay, cream and seasoning. Slide in the chicken pieces and scatter over the potatoes, turning everything over a few times so that the potatoes are immersed in the sauce. Put the lid on and place in the oven. After 40 mins, remove from the oven and stir in the mushrooms. Cover again and cook in the oven for 10 mins more until the chicken is cooked through and tender but not completely falling off the bone. You can now turn off the heat, and chill and freeze some or all of it (see right). If eating straight away, cook for 10 mins more, then sprinkle over the herbs.

PER SERVING 736 kcals, protein 60g, carbs 21g, fat 46g, sat fat 14g, fibre 4g, sugar 7g, salt 1.74g

TO FREEZE

Cool, then pack into a rigid container. Freeze for up to a month. Defrost in the fridge overnight, then gently reheat. Bring to the boil before serving.

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A month of festivities

There's an exciting festive activity on every week at The H Dubai this December.

Christmas time is definitely one of the loveliest times of the year! The aromas of gingerbread, festive beverages, and glittering décor everywhere from hotels to malls – what's not to like? The H Dubai is laying out an array of activities this season, so there's something for everyone throughout the month!

Week 1 DECORATE A GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Take your little ones to Al Massa Ballroom, to decorate a gingerbread house with sweets, coloured icing, and edible festive décor – it's a great activity for the family!

On December 12, each house costs Dhs150.

Week 2 BOOK YOUR TURKEY



Planning a festive feast at home? Forget just a turkey takeaway, their Christmas in a Crate includes all of the traditional Christmas favourites such as a slow-roasted American turkey with trimmings like chestnut and apple stuffing, Brussel sprouts with nutmeg, double-roasted fluffy potatoes with rosemary and garlic, mince pies, and other festive delights. The best part is, it comes in a beautifully designed large crate and can either be picked up at the hotel, or delivered right to your doorstep.

From December 10 to January 7. Dhs895 (5-6kg) and Dhs1,095 (9-10kg).

Week 3 INDULGE IN CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER



Executive chef Claudio has prepared a special five-course menu that will tantalise all tastebuds. All the traditional offerings are part of the menu at The Restaurant, and you can try bread stuffing, creamy panettone bread pudding, spiced gelato and frangelico zabaglione, among other offerings (see Tried and tested).

Dhs320 per person. 50 per cent off for children below 12, and complimentary for those below six.

CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

There's no better way to spend quality time with family and friends, than at a stylish Christmas Day brunch at The Restaurant. The buffet comprises of carving stations featuring traditional turkey, roast beef, and slow roast lamb, as well as an extensive selection of cheese and desserts. Festive beverages like mulled wine and eggnog are on offer, and all children get a visit from Santa at this brunch.

Dhs350 for the soft drinks package, and Dhs680 for the champagne package (inclusive of chauffeur drop-off service to select locations).

Week 4 TRY A NEW YEAR'S DAY BRUNCH

Brunch is a bit of an institution in the UAE, so why not begin the first day of the year with it? Mouthwatering roasted turkey with bread dumplings and cranberry sauce, Angus prime rib, freshly shucked oysters, lobster, and foie gras, are just some of the delectable treats in the buffet spread.

Dhs350 for the soft drinks package, and Dhs680 for the champagne package.

Tried and Tested

The Restaurant at The H Dubai has a special set-menu for Christmas Eve dinner, with some very special highlights to look forward to. To start with, indulge in tender poached lobster tail with tangy, juicy bursts of dried cherry tomatoes, accompanied by an innovative, sweet vanilla-cauliflower panna cotta that bounces around your tongue. A hearty roasted pumpkin soup serves as a reminder that it's winter, and a great time to indulge in the seasonal vegetable, while small parcels of wagyu beef ravioli, truffled corn and chanterelle mushrooms add texture to the creative soup. No Christmas meal is complete without turkey, and you can feast on a slow-roasted American one accompanied by a lip-smacking apple-infused gravy, with five-spice glazed chestnuts – adds crunchiness to the dish – and sweet dried heirloom carrots. To end with, the decadent cinnamon chocolate gowie toffee cake doused in rum eggnog, with crunch caramelised walnuts, is absolutely divine!

For all restaurant reservations, **call 04-5018888.**

Kitchen notes

Nutrition advice, cooking tips and product picks for your pantry.



Reader tip of the month

When cooking pulses, sprouts or thick gravies in a pressure cooker, add a teaspoon of semolina or rice powder, to avoid excess oil from gathering.

- Meenaxii Rani

Got a great tip you want to share?
Get in touch with us on facebook or twitter

Serve to impress!

Gourmet up your festive entertaining at home with a celebration platter that is unmistakably Christmassy, from Market & Platters. Choose from platters offering a range of luxury seafood items – including rare products like whole cooked Royal Brittany Lobsters, Tarbouriech Oysters and the majestic Norwegian Red King Crabs – caviar, foie gras, truffles, smoked salmons, and fine cheeses, or why not pick your favourites to create your own bespoke seafood platter? There's also a range of sweet treats on offer, from panettones to luxury chocolates and biscuits – so that sounds a lot like Christmas menu planning sorted! Platter prices start from about Dhs160, free delivery for orders over Dhs500. Call 04-4504466.



SMART FOOD SWAPS



408 calories
1 155g slice of cherry fudge cake with chocolate frosting



324 calories
2 blueberry muffins (114g), made with low-fat milk

Swap for



246 calories
1 portion of trifle (150g) with fresh cream

or



316 calories
1 slice (155g) of pumpkin pie



Shop talk

The whole concept of eating wholesome produce has really picked up in the UAE, and we're loving it! We've just found out a new specialty food store, The Farmer's Garden, will be opening up at Al Wasl Square soon. Get ready to fill your baskets with organic fruit and vegetables, high-quality olive oils, pasta, cheese, and other goodies. Call 04-3387750.

Health update> CHILDREN'S BONE HEALTH

According to the International Osteoporosis Foundation, the age of six is the most important stage when it comes to bone development in children. Children should be eating bone-healthy food at this age – the recommended daily dosage is 1,000mg per day – as this is when they grow by about 6cm. Milk, yoghurt, low-fat protein such as meat, chicken, fish, and whole grains and complex carbohydrates like potato, rice, whole grain pasta and vegetables are all good options. Additionally, children should get exposure to sunlight, as it's a great source of Vitamin D.

A dash of mustard

Grainy, English, Dijon – which one to choose? Here's a helpful guide to make sure you buy the right kind to suit your dishes:

- **English:** Spread it on sandwiches or stir through mashed potatoes, gravies and creamy sauces.
- **French:** Add it to dressings and sauces to add a little heat.
- **American-style:** Squeeze it onto a hot dog, or add a spoonful to marinades, sauces, and salad dressings.
- **Dijon:** This tastes great with macaroni cheese, in salad dressings, or as a condiment.
- **Wholegrain:** Eat this with red meat or ploughman's bread, as it adds texture.

Look what we found! 3 great new products for your kitchen



Nutritina coconut butter is a great alternative for dairy-free diets. Dhs45 from Coco Yogo at Ripe Farmer's Market.

Add hot water to Probios cacaobon instant cocoa drink, to make a cup of hot chocolate. Dhs27 at Biorganic.



Drinking water just got a lot more stylish with Aquila, the stylish Carlsbad Mineral Water glass bottles, designed by Italian luxury car designer, Pinifarina. Dhs7 from Carlsbad.ae.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

5 ways with dim sum

Xing Zhong Xu, head chef at Royal China restaurant, shows us creative new ideas for dumpling fillings. Photograph ANAS CHERUR



Xing Zhong Xu hails from China, and began his culinary career in 1994 in his home country, after getting a culinary degree. He has since worked at Shanghai and Guang Zhou, and moved to Dubai three years ago to work with the DIFC outlet of London restaurant brand, Royal China.

Vegetarian dumplings

MAKES 12 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS Easy

Knead **10 tbsp potato flour** and **15ml cooking oil**. Make 12 dough balls and flatten to 2mm in thickness, set aside. Finely dice **15g celery**, **5 tbsp enoki mushrooms**, **5 tbsp fungus mushrooms**, and **5 tbsp carrots**. Mix all the vegetables with **15ml sesame oil**, **3 tbsp sugar**, **2 tbsp salt** and place in each flattened dough piece. Twist and seal the ends, and steam for 5 mins. Garnish each with a **pea** before serving.

PER SERVING 37kcals, protein 0.1g, carbs 4.3g, fat 2.3g, sat fat 0.1g, fibre 0g, sugar 3g, salt 2.9g

Hong Kong style minced chicken and coriander dumplings

MAKES 12 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS Easy

Finely dice **1 tbsp celery**, **1 tbsp black mushrooms**, **1 tbsp carrots** and set aside. Dice **8 tbsp chicken** and mix with the vegetables in **15ml sesame oil**, **2 tbsp salt**, **3 tbsp sugar**, **6 tbsp coriander** and **2 tbsp chicken powder**. Knead **30g potato flour** with **15ml cooking oil** and make round dough balls. Flatten each to 2mm in thickness, fill with the mixture, and seal by pressing together the ends. Steam for 5 mins.

PER SERVING 55kcals, protein 1.7g, carbs 5.4g, fat 2.5g, sat fat 0.4g, fibre 0g, sugar 3g, salt 4g

Beef dumplings

MAKES 12 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 3 MINS Easy

Knead **5 tbsp wheat flour** with **6ml cooking oil** and make 12 round dough balls. Finely dice **2 tbsp black mushrooms**, and **6 tbsp beef**, and chop **2 tbsp chives**. Mix the beef and vegetables with **18ml sesame oil**, **2 tbsp sugar**, **2g salt**, **2 tbsp chicken powder** thoroughly. Flatten each dough ball to 2mm in thickness, and place the mixture on one side of the dumpling dough. Seal and steam for 3 mins.

PER SERVING 62kcals, protein 2.5g, carbs 4.8g, fat 3.2g, sat fat 0.7g, fibre 0.42g, sugar 2.1g, salt 1.3g

Fish dumplings

MAKES 12 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 3 MINS Easy

Knead **5 tbsp wheat flour with 6ml cooking oil** and make 12 round dough balls. Clean about **24g Kaluga (or any other white fish)** and cut into small cubes. Mix the fish with **2 tbsp sesame oil**, a pinch of **salt** and **sugar**, **2 tbsp curry powder** and **2 tbsp chicken powder**. Flatten the dough ball to 2mm in thickness and fill each on one side. Close and seal by pressing the ends. Steam for 3 mins.

PER SERVING 50kcals, protein 0.6g, carbs 3.5g, fat 3.1g, sat fat 0.3g, fibre 0.8g, sugar 0g, salt 1.2g

Prawn dumplings

MAKES 12 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS Easy

To make the dough, knead together **30g potato flour** with **15ml cooking oil**. Make 12 dough balls and set aside. Finely dice **3 tbsp winter bamboo shoots**, and **15 tbsp prawns**, and mix with **2 tbsp salt**, **3 tbsp sugar**, **15ml sesame oil**, **2 tbsp chicken powder**. Flatten each dough ball to 2mm in thickness, and fill half of it with the prawn mixture. Seal tightly and steam for 5 mins.

PER SERVING 47kcals, protein 0.2g, carbs 5.4g, fat 2.4g, sat fat 0.4g, fibre 0g, sugar 3g, salt 4g



Vegetarian dumplings

Styling and text by NICOLA MONTEATH. Props from Crate and Barrel

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at Emirates Golf Club



With the festive season fast approaching, Emirates Golf Club is proud to announce an exciting range of packages and events that are sure to brighten up this special time of year. Whether you wish to enjoy an intimate gathering, welcome in the New Year in impressive surroundings or simply need a helping hand in the kitchen, we guarantee a truly memorable festive experience.

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Chef skills

Learn to: Make Venison Wellington



TIP

BUYING VENISON

You will need loin of venison for this recipe, a cut also known as the loin fillet. Ask for a whole piece of loin or loin fillet, off the bone, well-trimmed and cut from the centre of the loin so that it's the same size at either end.



Serve up a game version of the dinner party classic by following this step-by-step masterclass from BBC chef James Martin.

Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Venison Wellington

SERVES 6 ● PREP 50 MINS PLUS COOLING AND RESTING ● COOK 1 HR 20 MINS

A little effort | P | Iron

700g trimmed loin of venison (see tip, right)
1 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra
1½ tbsp English mustard
50g butter
1 large shallot, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
400g chestnut mushrooms, very finely chopped in a food processor
1 tbsp thyme leaves, finely chopped
1 tbsp parsley, finely chopped
2 tbsp brandy
12 slices prosciutto
Plain flour, for dusting
375g pack all-butter puff pastry
2 egg yolks, beaten
Mashed roots and gravy (see recipe, right), to serve

YOU WILL NEED
Food processor
Large frying pan
Pastry brush
Cling film
Rolling pin
Non-stick baking tray
Sharp knife

PER SERVING 687 kcals, protein 55g, carbs 31g, fat 37g, sat fat 17g, fibre 1g, sugar 3g, salt 2.8g

Food styling SARA BUENFELD | Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN



Dry the venison with kitchen paper, then season well. Heat the oil in a frying pan and sear the meat all over for about 8 mins. Brush with mustard, leave to cool, then chill for 20 mins. Reserve any juices for the gravy.



Melt the butter and soften the shallot and garlic. Add the mushrooms, herbs and seasoning, and cook for 10 mins until you have a paste-like mixture. Add the brandy and cook until it's evaporated. Leave to cool.



Overlap 2-3 sheets of cling film on a clean surface and lay the prosciutto in 2 rows, slightly overlapping each slice. Spread the cooled mushroom paste all over the prosciutto, creating a thin, even layer.



Place the fillet in the centre of the mushroom mixture. Using the edge of the cling film, carefully draw the layer of prosciutto and mushroom around the meat.



Roll into a sausage shape, twisting the ends of the cling film as you do, to form a tight log. Chill for 30 mins to firm up.



On a lightly floured surface, roll the pastry to a rectangle a little larger than this magazine, and trim the edges to neaten.



Carefully unwrap the prosciutto parcel and lay in the middle of the pastry.



Fold over the bottom half of the pastry. Lightly brush the rest of the sheet with beaten egg.



Roll the whole thing around the meat to encase. Neatly fold under the shorter edges to create a parcel.



Transfer to a baking sheet and, using your hands, smooth the pastry around the meat, pressing it firmly to avoid any air being trapped. Brush the pastry all over with beaten egg yolk.



Chill for at least 30 mins or up to 24 hrs. Then, using the back of a knife, mark the pastry, being careful not to cut all the way through. Heat oven to 220C/200C fan.



Lightly oil a non-stick baking tray and heat until hot. Put the Wellington on the tray and bake for 30 mins (35 mins for well done). Remove from oven, brush with extra egg and rest for 20 mins.

MAKING GRAVY Melt a large knob of butter in a medium pan, add 1 finely chopped shallot, 1 crushed garlic clove and 1 thyme sprig, and cook until soft. Add 1 tbsp flour, brown for about 1 min, then pour in 250ml Port and reduce by two-thirds. Add 400ml beef stock and any reserved juices from the venison (see step 1), then reduce again by two-thirds until syrupy. Season, add 1 tbsp redcurrant jelly, if you like, and strain before serving.

Dusit Thani
DUBAI



Timeless Traditions

Give the gift of time this festive season by upholding the timeless tradition of gathering your family, friends and loved ones on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

Celebrate with a stellar view of the Burj Khalifa and Downtown cityscape as you uncover station after station of luscious gourmet offerings from the three specialty restaurants at the 24th Floor – Benjarong, PAX and The Californian.

Christmas
Brunch

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Dinner

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AED 3,400 with house beverages and a complimentary bottle of bubbly

Table for 6
AED 4,800 with house beverages and two complimentary bottles of bubbly

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AED 6,000 with house beverages and two complimentary bottles of bubbly

- Buffet starts at 7:30 pm and ends at 12:30 am.
- Complimentary bottle/s of bubbly will be served at 12:00 midnight.
- Table reservations are for minimum of four (4) guests.
- Additional fees per person:

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(kids from 5 years and below are free)

For table reservations and inquiries, call 04 317 4515 or email dine.dtdu@dusit.com

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Crispy roast potatoes, turkey, sprouts and cranberry sauce… you will find all the much-loved flavours of Christmas here, an alternative main course, lots of choices for side dishes and a few modern twists along the way. The festive season is all about enjoying family favourites, and creating new ones for the next generation. Recipes SARA BUENFELD Photographs SAM STOWELL

Your festive feast

Every recipe you need for your celebration meal



food styling SARA BUENFELD and JENNIFER JOYCE | styling REBECCA NEWPORT | Wine notes sarah jane evans mw

Turkey & trimmings

Our best-ever recipes for the festive bird and all its classic side dishes

Bay & bacon roast turkey with make-ahead gravy

SERVES 8 ● PREP 30 MINS PLUS RESTING ● COOK 3 HRS 40 MINS-4 HRS A little effort ❄ P Fibre Vit C Iron

FOR THE TURKEY

5-5.5kg oven-ready turkey, neck and giblets removed
¼ quantity Sausage & Bramley stuffing (see recipe, next page)
1 large onion, quartered
1 lemon, halved
A few bay leaves
85g soft butter
10 rashers streaky bacon
150ml dry white or red wine

FOR THE MAKE-AHEAD GRAVY

1 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
1 bay leaf
50g plain flour
300ml strong chicken stock, plus extra if necessary

1 First make the gravy – you can do this several days ahead. Heat the oil in a non-stick pan and fry the onion and carrot with the bay leaf for 10 mins, stirring frequently, until softened and golden. Meanwhile, blend the flour with 300ml cold water to make a smooth paste.
2 Remove the bay leaf from the pan and pour in the stock, closely followed by the flour mixture, stirring all the time until thickened. Leave to bubble for 5-10 mins, stirring frequently, then blitz with a hand blender until completely smooth. Pour into a bowl and cover the surface of the gravy with cling film or baking parchment to prevent a skin forming as it cools. Chill.
3 Weigh the turkey (you may need to use bathroom scales) and calculate the cooking time by allowing 40 mins per kg for a 4.5-6.5kg turkey, then 35 mins for every kg of turkey over that weight. As a guide, a turkey this size should take 3 hrs 20 mins-3 hrs 40 mins, plus 30-45 mins resting time.
4 Pack the stuffing into the neck end of the turkey, smoothing down the skin and tucking it under the bird for a neat finish. Put the onion and lemon, with some bay leaves, inside the cavity. Spread the butter over the skin that covers the breasts and lay the streaky bacon on top, to cover and protect each breast and seal in the butter. Can be done the night before, but take out of the fridge 1 hr before roasting so that it comes back to room temperature.
5 On the day, heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Lay the turkey on a large sheet of double-thickness foil, long enough to completely cover it, then lift into a roasting tin and season well. Pour the wine inside the cavity, then bring the foil up over the top of the turkey and seal it well. Roast for the calculated cooking time. For the final 40 mins, open the foil and remove the bacon (serve alongside the turkey or save it for a turkey sandwich). Pour off all of the cooking juices and use a little of the buttery oil that rises to the top to baste the bird. Roast until the turkey is golden and the juices that run out of the thigh are clear, with no sign of pink, when pierced with a skewer. (If you are using a digital thermometer, the thigh should be cooked to 80C and the breast to 75C) Leave to rest on a warm platter, covered with foil and tea towels, for up to 45 mins.
6 While the turkey is roasting for the final 40 mins, skim the fat from the pan juices and pour into a jug. The amount of juices you get is dependent on the type of turkey that you are cooking, as speciality bronze turkeys will give you less juice than a white turkey – so make up to 600ml with chicken stock if you need to. Tip the gravy base into a pan, gently heat it with a little of the turkey juices to loosen the consistency, then gradually blend in the remainder and cook until bubbling. Season.
7 To serve, carve the turkey in the kitchen and arrange on a hot platter with a little of the hot gravy poured over, or bring the whole bird to the table. Any leftover meat can be frozen in the gravy.

PER SERVING 929 kcals, protein 106g, carbs 14g, fat 48g, sat fat 18g, fibre 2g, sugar 5g, salt 2.9g

DECORATING YOUR TURKEY PLATTER

If you're bringing the whole turkey to the table, create a bit of drama with fresh herbs and red onion wedges, roasted in the oven for 20 minutes while the turkey rests. Brushing a little lemon juice on the onions first will ensure that they stay beautifully red.



Really good roast potatoes

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 30 MINS Easy ❄ Gluten Free

3kg King Edward potatoes, cut into large chunks
175g goose fat
4 tbsp sunflower oil (or 8 tbsp if you're not using goose fat)
Flaky salt

1 Boil the potatoes for 5 mins in salted water until the outside of the potatoes starts to soften. Drain well, return to the pan and shake to fluff up the outsides – alternatively, you can scratch them with a fork. (This process will make them crispier.)
2 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Put the goose fat (if using) and oil in a large shallow roasting tin and heat for 8-10 mins until the goose fat has melted and the mixture is really hot. Remove from the oven, carefully tip in the potatoes and stir well to coat them in the fat. Spread them out as much as the space allows and roast underneath the turkey for 45 mins, turning frequently and adjusting the positions so that they brown evenly.
3 When the turkey comes out of the oven, turn up the heat to 220C/200C fan, season the potatoes with the flaky salt and roast for another 30 mins, turning halfway through the cooking time, until beautifully golden.

PER SERVING 537 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 60g, fat 28g, sat fat 7g, fibre 7g, sugar 1g, salt 0.3g >>



Serve in hearty slices

Sausage & Bramley stuffing

SERVES 8 ● PREP 25 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 10 MINS Easy P

1 tbsp olive oil
1 celery stick, finely chopped
1 large onion, chopped
800g meaty Cumberland sausages
1 Bramley apple, peeled and chopped (about 325g)
85g fresh white breadcrumbs
2 tbsp chopped fresh sage
5 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, plus extra to serve (optional)
1 large egg
10 rindless streaky bacon rashers

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, add the celery and onion, and cook for about 5 mins until starting to soften. Tip into a bowl to cool while you remove the sausagemeat from the skins. Add the apple, sausagemeat, breadcrumbs, herbs, egg and seasoning. Mix well – the easiest way is to knead it together in the bowl with your hands. Use ¼ to stuff the neck cavity of the turkey (see previous page).

2 For the remainder, line a 900g loaf tin with 8 rashers of streaky bacon, spoon in the stuffing, lift the bacon over and cover with the last 2 rashers. Heat oven to 180C/160C fan and bake the stuffing for 40-50 mins. Can be made ahead up to this point and chilled for 2-3 days. Turn out onto a baking-parchment-lined baking tray and return to the oven (once the turkey has come out) at 220C/200C fan for 15-20 mins more to brown the bacon. If chilled, reheat at the lower temperature for 45 mins, covered in foil, then turn out for the extra 15 mins at the higher temperature. Allow to stand, then scatter with parsley (if you like), slice and serve.

PER SERVING 485 kcals, protein 21g, carbs 23g, fat 34g, sat fat 12g, fibre 2g, sugar 8g, salt 3.5g

Mustard Yorkies

MAKES 12 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy ❄ V

12 tsp sunflower oil, for the tin
140g plain flour
3 large eggs
300ml milk
1 tbsp wholegrain mustard

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Put 1 tsp oil in each well of a 12-hole muffin tin and heat in the oven for 6 mins. Meanwhile, tip the flour and some seasoning into a large, wide jug or a bowl. Beat the eggs with the milk and mustard, then gradually beat into the flour mixture until it makes a smooth batter.

2 Pour or ladle the batter into the tin, taking care that it doesn't splatter up and burn you. Bake for 25-30 mins until well risen and golden – try to keep the door closed, as this will help you get a good rise on the Yorkies.

PER yorkie 102 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 10g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 1g, sugar 1g, salt 0.2g





Two must-have sauces for the Christmas feast

Cranberry & marmalade sauce

SERVES 8 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy ❄ V Low fat Gluten Free

300g pack fresh or frozen cranberries
Juice of 1 orange
50g light muscovado sugar
100g orange shred marmalade

Tip the cranberries into a medium pan over a low heat with the orange juice, sugar and marmalade, and stir until the sugar and marmalade melt and the mixture starts to bubble. Cook for 3-5 mins, depending on whether the cranberries are fresh or frozen, as the frozen ones will soften more quickly. They need to be tender but still hold their shape, so try to squash one to see if it is soft enough. The sauce will thicken as it cools, but this has a looser texture than shop-bought. *Will keep for 1 week in the fridge.*

PER SERVING 69 kcals, protein none, carbs 16g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre 2g, sugar 16g, salt none

Creamy bread & onion sauce

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy ❄ V

50g butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 fresh bay leaves, folded in half to break the spine
8 whole cloves
450ml semi-skimmed milk
100g crustless white bread, chopped
100ml double cream
Generous grating of nutmeg

1 Melt the butter in a non-stick pan, add the onion, bay and cloves, and cook, part-covered with a lid, for 8-10 mins until the onion is soft but not coloured. Pour in the milk, part-cover again and simmer gently for 20 mins more.
2 Remove the bay leaves and all the cloves, then add three-quarters of the bread and blitz with a hand blender to make a smooth sauce. Stir in the cream, nutmeg and remaining bread, and chill. *Will keep in the fridge for 4 days; warm gently before serving.*

PER SERVING 182 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 11g, fat 13g, sat fat 8g, fibre 1g, sugar 5g, salt 0.3g >>

I WANT TO INDULGE A BUBBLORANGE BRUNCH PLEASE



Everything has gone distinctly orange. The chefs at c.taste restaurant have insisted on adding some zest and colour to our new Friday Brunch; Bubbl-Orange. Starters, savory dishes and sweets have all been created in vibrant hues of orange.

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CENTRO Barsha · Dubai



A delicious vegetarian main

Chestnut, spinach & blue cheese en croûte

SERVES 6-8 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS 1 HR CHILLING ● COOK 55 MINS A little effort V

Calcium Folate Fibre 1 of 5-a-day

50g butter
500g pack leeks, thickly sliced
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
240g bag baby spinach
415g can chestnut purée
3 large eggs, plus 1 for glazing
½ nutmeg, finely grated
200g whole cooked chestnuts, halved
85g fresh white breadcrumbs
220g blue Shropshire cheese, rind trimmed, diced
500g pack all-butter puff pastry
FOR THE SAUCE
500ml vegetable stock
2 leeks, thinly sliced
1 tbsp cornflour
300ml pot double cream

1 Melt the butter in a large frying pan. Add the leeks and garlic, stir well, cover and cook for 10 mins until the leeks are soft, stirring a few times to check that they don't catch. Tip into a large bowl. Put the spinach in the pan and allow it to wilt. Leave to cool and, when cold, squeeze out as much liquid from it as you possibly can.

2 Tip the chestnut purée into the bowl with the leeks and add the 3 eggs, the nutmeg, chestnuts, spinach, breadcrumbs, cheese and seasoning, and stir until well mixed. Chill for at least 1 hr until the mixture firms up.

3 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the pastry to a rectangle large enough to completely enclose the filling. Carefully lift onto a large, long baking tray that has been lined with baking parchment, then brush round all the edges of the pastry with the remaining egg. Spoon the filling down the centre of the length of the pastry, leaving the ends clear. Tuck the ends over the filling, then firmly lift up the sides to wrap them round, trimming away any excess pastry as you go. Brush with more egg to glaze, then make a few holes in the top so steam can escape as it cooks. Bake for 40 mins until golden and the filling is firm. Remove from the oven, brush with more glaze and bake for 10 mins more.

4 To make the sauce, heat the stock in a medium pan, add the leeks, boil for 5 mins, then take off the heat and scoop out 2 tbsp of the leeks. Blitz the rest in the pan with the cornflour using a hand blender, then cook, stirring, until thickened. Pour in the cream and reserved leeks and warm through. *Can be made 2 days ahead and chilled.* Serve the pastry in thick slices with the sauce.

PER SERVING (8) 889 kcals, protein 19g, carbs 60g, fat 62g, sat fat 28g, fibre 8g, sugar 9g, salt 2.1g >>



Stunning sides

A selection of colourful vegetables bring a meal together

Steamed leeks & peas with herby vinaigrette

SERVES 8 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy V Low fat Fibre 1 of 5-a-day Good for you

6 even-sized medium leeks (about 1kg)
350g frozen peas
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp white wine vinegar
1 tsp clear honey
1 tsp Dijon mustard
2 tbsp finely chopped parsley
1 tbsp chopped mint

1 Trim the outer leaves from the leeks and cut off the top down to where the leaves split. Cut the leeks into 3-4 chunks, then wash really well to remove any grit. Heat a steamer, add the leeks and cook for 8 mins. Tip in the peas and cook for 2-3 mins more until both are tender.
2 Meanwhile, whisk the oil, vinegar, honey, mustard and seasoning together in a serving bowl to make the vinaigrette. Add the hot vegetables and herbs, and mix well

PER SERVING 112 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 8g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 7g, sugar 4g, salt 0.1g >>

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Roast parsnips with maple syrup & rosemary

SERVES 8 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy V Low fat Fibre 1 of 5-a-day

1kg parsnips (around 15cm in length), peeled
4 tsp plain flour
4 tsp olive or rapeseed oil
4 tsp maple syrup
2 rosemary sprigs, leaves only, chopped
Flaky sea salt

1 Halve the parsnips down their length (as they are not too big, the cores shouldn't be woody so there is no need to remove them), then cut each half into 3 equal pieces. To do this, cut off the bottom and halve the top down the length. Boil for 5 mins, then drain well and toss with the flour.
2 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Put the oil in a large roasting tin and heat in the oven for 5 mins. Add the parsnips, turn them in the oil and give the tin a shake so that all the parsnips are in contact with the base of the tin. Roast for 30 mins, turning once, until golden. Tip onto a platter, drizzle with the maple syrup and scatter with rosemary and salt.

PER SERVING 116 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 19g, fat 1g, sat fat none, fibre 8g, sugar 9g, salt 0.2g



Savoy cabbage with shallots & fennel seeds

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy V Low fat Folate Vit C 1 of 5-a-day Good for you

300g pack small shallots
2 tbsp olive oil
2 large garlic cloves, sliced
1 tsp fennel seeds, lightly crushed
1 Savoy cabbage (outer leaves discarded) quartered, cored and shredded
150ml hot vegetable stock

1 Boil the shallots in their skins for 10-15 mins until they are soft but still hold their shape. Leave to cool then slip the skins from the shallots and halve them. *Can be prepared a couple of days in advance, then chilled.*
2 Heat the oil in a large non-stick wok, and stir-fry the garlic, fennel seeds and shallots for a couple of mins until the shallots are golden. Remove from the pan.
3 Add the cabbage to the pan and stir-fry until it starts to wilt a little, then pour in the stock, cover the wok and cook for 3 mins until just tender. Test to see if the cabbage is done to your liking; if not, cook a little longer, then add the shallot mixture, heat through and serve.

PER SERVING 77 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 6g, fat 3g, sat fat 1g, fibre 5g, sugar 5g, salt 0.1g >>

Red cabbage with juniper & pears

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 10 MINS

Easy | V | Low fat | Fibre | Vit C | 2 of 5-a-day

2 tbsp olive oil
2 onions, halved and sliced
2 large garlic cloves, chopped
30 juniper berries, chopped
1 red cabbage (about 1kg), quartered, cored and shredded
2 tsp ground cinnamon or 2 cinnamon sticks
4 tbsp red wine vinegar
3 tbsp light muscovado sugar
600ml vegetable stock, made with 2 stock cubes
2 firm pears, peeled, cored and each cut into 8 wedges

1 Heat the oil in a large heavy-based pan. Add the onions and sauté for about 8 mins. Stir in the garlic and juniper and cook for 1 min more. Add as much cabbage as you can and cook, stirring, until it starts to soften, then make room for more and add the rest with the cinnamon, vinegar, sugar and stock.

2 Give everything a good stir, then cover the pan and leave to cook over a low heat for 35 mins, stirring occasionally and checking it isn't catching on the bottom of the pan.

3 Add the pears and cook for 10-15 mins more, depending on their ripeness. If freezing, cook for just 5 mins. Leftovers will keep in the fridge for 1 week.

PER SERVING 130 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 19g, fat 3g, sat fat none, fibre 7g, sugar 17g, salt 0.2g

Carrot & tarragon purée

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS

Easy | V | 1 of 5-a-day | Gluten Free

1kg pack carrots, sliced
50g butter
1 tbsp chopped tarragon leaves

Boil the carrots in salted water for 20-25 mins until tender. Drain in a colander and leave to steam-dry for 1-2 mins. Return to the pan with the butter and roughly mash if you would like a little texture in them, or blitz with a hand blender for a silky-smooth purée. Season well and stir in the tarragon. Will keep in the fridge for 3 days. Reheat in the microwave for 2-3 mins, or in a pan.

PER SERVING 86 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 6g, fat 6g, sat fat 3g, fibre 4g, sugar 5g, salt 0.5g >>




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You know it's going to be good!

Celeriac & potato gratin

SERVES 8 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 50 MINS

A little effort | ❄ | V | 1 of 5-a-day | Gluten Free

50g butter, plus extra for greasing
2 large onions, halved and thinly sliced
1 tsp golden caster sugar
500ml milk
Good grating of nutmeg
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
5 thyme sprigs, chopped
300ml pot double cream
1 celeriac (about 450g), peeled
1.25 kg even-sized potatoes
50g finely grated Parmesan (or vegetarian alternative)

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan and grease a shallow ovenproof dish about 35 x 24cm. Melt the butter in a non-stick frying pan, add the onions and fry for 10 mins, stirring frequently, until soft and starting to turn golden. Sprinkle over some seasoning and the sugar, stir again, then cook 5-10 mins more until golden. Meanwhile, heat the milk with the nutmeg, garlic, thyme and seasoning. When the mixture starts to boil, pour in the cream and turn off the heat.

2 Quarter the celeriac and thinly slice, then arrange in the base of the dish. Pour over half the milk mixture, then spoon over the golden onions. Thinly slice the ends of the potatoes, reserving the middles. Pile the sliced potatoes into the dish, then thinly slice the reserved middle sections and arrange neatly on top. (By cutting the potatoes this way, you should have neat slices roughly all the same size for the top of the gratin.) Pour over the remaining milk mixture, scatter over the Parmesan and bake for 1 hr 30 mins until a knife easily cuts through the layers. Allow to rest for 10 mins before serving to allow the creamy sauce to soak into the potatoes.

PER SERVING 464 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 36g, fat 29g, sat fat 18g, fibre 8g, sugar 10g, salt 0.6g

Decadent dessert



Cherry pecan Christmas pudding

SERVES 8 ● PREP 35 MINS PLUS OVERNIGHT SOAKING ● COOK 6-8 HRS PLUS 2 HRS REHEATING

A little effort ❄ 1 of 5-a-day

300g mixed dried fruit
200g glacé cherries, 85g halved
50g mixed peel
1 medium carrot, finely grated
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 orange, zested and segments cut out
100g light muscovado sugar
1 tsp mixed spice
100ml brandy
50ml Disaronno
100g butter, frozen, plus 25g soft butter and extra for greasing
2 large eggs, beaten
50g each blanched almonds and pecan nuts, half of each chopped
100g self-raising flour
175g fresh white breadcrumbs
2 tbsp golden syrup
Sprig of holly, to decorate (optional)

1 Put the mixed fruit, halved glacé cherries, mixed peel, carrot, and lemon and orange zest in a bowl with the sugar and spice. Pour in the lemon juice and alcohol, and stir really well. Cover and leave to soak overnight.

2 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan and put a full kettle of water on to boil. Grease a 1.5-litre pudding basin and put a disc of baking parchment in the base. Stir the eggs into the fruit mixture, then stir in the chopped nuts, flour and breadcrumbs. Finally, grate in the frozen butter, stirring the mixture frequently so that it evenly disperses.

3 For the topping, mix the soft butter and golden syrup together, and spread over the bottom of the basin. Pile in the whole cherries, orange segments and whole nuts, breaking the pecans in half as you add them. Try not to just make a thick layer of fruit and nuts on the base – ease some up the side too. Spoon in the pudding mixture and level the top, then cover with baking parchment and foil. Tie the top with string or an extra-large rubber band, then place in a roasting tin and pour in the water from the kettle. Cover the whole thing with a tent of foil to seal in all the steam, then place in the oven for 6 hrs. This gives a light pudding, so if you prefer a darker one, cook for up to 8 hrs. Will keep in the fridge for 1 month. If you want it to last longer, omit the orange segments.

4 To serve, steam in a large pan with an upturned saucer on the base for 2 hrs, then turn out and decorate with holly, if you like. Serve with Brandy syrup cream (right).

PER SERVING 654 kcals, protein 9g, carbs 90g, fat 23g, sat fat 9g, fibre 4g, sugar 65g, salt 1.0g

Brandy syrup cream

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● NO COOK Easy ❄

300ml pot whipping or double cream
2 tbsp golden syrup
1 tbsp brandy
1 tbsp Disaronno

1 Tip the cream into a bowl and add the golden syrup, brandy and Disaronno. Stir to dissolve the syrup, then lightly whip with a hand whisk or electric beaters until the mixture holds its shape.

2 Spoon into a serving bowl, cover and chill until ready to serve.

PER SERVING 211 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 5g, fat 20g, sat fat 12g, fibre 1g, sugar 5g, salt 0.1g GF

Festive baking



The Shangri-La Dubai has an array of activities lined up for the season. Executive Pastry Chef, Clement Raybaud, helps you get into the festive spirit with this classic cookie recipe.



Gingerbread man cookies

MAKES 4 LARGE COOKIES | PREP 30 MINS, PLUS 1 HR TO REST | COOK 15-20 MINS Easy

115g butter
100g dark brown sugar
1 egg
170g molasses or honey (can be half/half)
385g sifted all-purpose flour
3g baking soda
1g baking powder
20g ground ginger
10g cinnamon
2g cloves powder
1g ground black pepper
3g salt

1 In a large bowl, beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs and molasses.

2 Sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, spices and salt. Stir this mixture into the butter and divide the dough into thirds. Wrap each piece of dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hr.

3 Preheat the oven to 180C.

4 Roll the dough out between two pieces of waxed paper – it should be about 1/8 inch in thickness. Cut with a gingerbread man shaped cookie cutter and place on an ungreased cookie sheet. You can decorate it with raisins, chocolate chips or red candy. Refrigerate for 15 mins, and then bake for 8-10 mins, or until crisp, but not dark brown. Set aside to cool on the cookie sheet for 1 min, remove and place on a wire rack to cool completely. Draw the face on with icing and enjoy fresh or store for later.

TIP *If using the cookies for bunting or other decorations, make a hole for the cord or hook by poking the cookies with a toothpick or skewer as soon as they come out of the oven.*

Festive offerings

Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai, comes alive this festive season with visits from characters like gingerbread women, Santa's elves, angels, snow folk, the Grinch, and Santa Claus! Here are some of the highlights:

- **Buy your gingerbread house, stollen, panettone, baked pudding and chocolate truffles from the Gingerbread House in the lobby. *Open from December 5 to January 2.***
- **Enjoy the Festive High Tea buffet at the Lobby lounge where you can indulge in coffee, tea, warm scones and pastries. *Until December 26, Dhs120 per person.***
- **Order your turkey and trimmings like sweet and roasted potatoes, chicken sausages, glazed chestnuts, roasted vegetables, gravy, and cranberry sauce. (Dhs780 (for 5-6kgs) and Dhs840 (for 6-7kgs).**
- **Indulge in carved turkey and trimmings, seafood on ice, and barbecue, among other delights at Dunes Café. *From Dhs295 on Christmas Eve and Dhs350 on Christmas Day. Dhs1,195 for New Year's Eve.***
- **Try an eight-course Chinese menu at Shang Palace, from Dhs288 on Christmas Eve, and Dhs220 onwards on Christmas Day. *From Dhs788 per person for New Year's Eve.***
- **Experience a French-Vietnamese style seven-course Christmas menu at Hoi An. *From Dhs375 on Christmas Eve, and Dhs350 on Christmas Day. From Dhs695 per person for New Year's Eve.***
- **On New Year's eve, party with family and friends at ikandy, and watch the fireworks near Burj Khalifa. *Dhs1,295 per person.***

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MISSING



Have you seen this man?

Name: Santa Claus

Last Seen: Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai

There's so much happening at Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai this festive season you'll never want to leave. With a wide variety of special festivities and the chance to meet a whole host of seasonal characters throughout the hotel, enjoy a quiet winter afternoon tea, indulge in mouth-watering Christmas spreads and party the night away in funky nightspots, all under one roof.

Join us as we spread seasonal cheer over Christmas and New Year and make sure your celebrations are truly memorable.

For enquiries and reservations, call 04 405 2703.

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THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS

Celebrate this Festive Season at InterContinental Hotels Group Dubai Festival City in style and spread the joy with family and friends.

Unwind in our superbly-appointed luxury accommodation, dine from an array of world-class culinary and nightlife choices, pamper yourself in our serene Arabian themed spa or enjoy Dubai's most spectacular and versatile event space for your private party with stunning views of the city's glittering skyline.

Luxurious facilities with exemplary service, creatively decorated venues with flawless attention to detail and a plethora of special offers will make this festive time of year special beyond your expectations.

Discover the best settings available to bid adieu to 2014 and welcome the New Year!

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Come on over

Whatever type of Christmas get-together you're having, this easy-going Asian-inspired menu is designed to keep guests happy and party hosts relaxed. Recipes JANE HORNBY Photographs DAVID MUNNS



KEEP-IT-CASUAL MENU FOR 8

- Spicy satay wings with peanut sauce
- Sticky pork & pineapple hotpot
- Oven-baked fragrant rice
- Spinach & squash salad with coconut dressing
- Christmas crumble friands

Food styling katy greenwood | Styling rebecca Newport



MAKE A STOCK

Use the chicken wing tips to make a good stock. Put them in a medium pan, cover with water, add a few slices of onion (skin on) and a couple of peppercorns. Simmer for 30 mins, then strain the stock into a jug and use in the satay sauce.

Spicy satay wings with peanut sauce

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS 4 HRS MARINATING ● COOK 50 MINS

Easy ❄ WINGS IN MARINADE ONLY

1.6kg whole chicken wings
Sweet chilli sauce
1 cucumber, deseeded and cut into sticks, to serve
FOR THE MARINADE
1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tbsp light soy sauce
2 heaped tsp turmeric
2 heaped tsp ground cumin
4 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp coconut cream
3 tbsp golden caster sugar
FOR THE PEANUT SAUCE
1 tbsp sunflower oil
3 garlic cloves, crushed
Knob of ginger, finely grated
1 lemongrass stalk, bruised
1 Thai chilli, pricked all over with the tip of a knife (see tip, top right)
1 tsp ground cumin
4 tbsp crunchy peanut butter
1 tbsp golden caster sugar
2 tbsp coconut cream
100ml chicken stock (see tip, left)

1 Using a sharp knife or kitchen shears, snip the wing tips from the wings at the first knuckle. Discard the tips or use to make stock (see above left). Cut the remaining wing through the joint. Put the wings in a large non-metallic bowl or a food bag. Mix together the marinade ingredients and pour over the wings, toss well to coat, then chill for at least 4 hrs or overnight.

2 For the sauce, heat the oil in a pan, then add the garlic, ginger, lemongrass and chilli, and fry for 30 secs until aromatic. Stir in the cumin, toast for a few secs, then stir in the remaining ingredients. Simmer just long enough to make a slightly thickened sauce. Spoon into a bowl, cover and leave to cool. Can be made up to 3 days ahead and chilled.

3 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Spread the wings over a large baking tray, sprinkle with a little salt and roast for 40-45 mins, turning halfway, until crisped and golden. If a large amount of juice has collected in the tray at the halfway point, pour it away before continuing to roast. Just before serving, warm the peanut sauce gently and remove the lemongrass and chilli. Serve with the wings, sweet chilli sauce and cucumber sticks.

PER SERVING 405 kcals, protein 30g, carbs 16g, fat 25g, sat fat 7g, fibre 1g, sugar 14g, salt 1.4g

GETTING AHEAD

- Chicken wings can be marinated overnight or longer, and the sauce can be made up to 3 days ahead.
- Make the pork hotpot up to 1 month ahead and freeze, or chill for up to 2 days. Reheat gently, then scatter with coriander leaves to serve.
- For the salad, the squash can be roasted up to 1 day ahead, and the dressing can be chilled for a day too.
- The crumble topping for the friands will be at its crunchiest on the day they are baked. But a clever way to get ahead is to bag up the crumble mix and chill, and also bag up the dry ingredients from step 2.

TAME THE HEAT

Pricking the chilli instead of chopping it lets just enough flavour out, adding a tingling but not overly fiery note to the sauce.



Sticky pork & pineapple hotpot

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 2 HRS 30 MINS Easy ❄ P Low cal 1 of 5-a-day

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1.5kg (about 8) pork shoulder steaks, each cut into 4 thick strips
3 onions, roughly chopped
4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
Small bunch of coriander, stalks finely chopped, leaves reserved
3 Thai red chillies, 2 sliced, 1 left whole and pricked
3 star anise
100g dark soft brown sugar
2 tbsp tomato purée
2 tbsp fish sauce
600ml chicken stock
350g fresh pineapple, cut into chunks

1 Heat the oil in a large, flameproof casserole dish. Season the pork, and brown it in 2 or 3 batches until golden, about 5 mins per batch. Set aside in a bowl. Stir the onions into the remaining fat, cover and soften for 5 mins – they will take on the browned colour of the meat. Heat oven to 160C/140C fan.
2 Add the garlic, coriander stalks, chillies and anise to the dish, sizzle for 1 min, stirring often, then mix in the sugar and tomato purée. When these have melted and it looks a bit like barbecue sauce, return the pork and its resting juices to the dish, along with the fish sauce and stock. Tuck in the pineapple chunks here and there.
3 Once simmering, cover the hotpot, leaving a small gap for steam to escape, and transfer to the oven for 2 hrs. With 30 mins to go, skim some of the fat from the top (this tends to seal the liquid in, making it more difficult for the sauce to reduce), then return to the oven. The pork will be meltingly soft when ready. If the sauce is thin, lift the pork into a warmed serving dish, put the casserole dish on the hob and simmer until the sauce has slightly thickened. Leave to cool for 5 mins, taste for seasoning, pour over the pork and sprinkle over the coriander leaves.

PER SERVING 339 kcals, protein 40g, carbs 21g, fat 10g, sat fat 3g, fibre 2g, sugar 19g, salt 1.1g

Oven-baked fragrant rice

SERVES 8 ● PREP 5 MINS PLUS SOAKING ● COOK 30 MINS

Easy ❄ V Good for you Gluten Free

600g jasmine rice
1l water

1 Place the rice in a large ovenproof pan and cover with cold water. Leave to soak for 30 mins. Meanwhile, heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Drain the rice and rinse it in a few changes of cold water. Add the water and salt, bring to the boil, then cover tightly with a lid or foil.
2 Bake for 25 mins until the rice has swollen and fluffed up. You can keep it hot in a low oven, tightly covered with foil, for at least 1 hour. If you prefer, bake in a baking dish from cold for 45 mins.

PER SERVING 245 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 53g, fat 1g, sat fat none, fibre 2g, sugar none, salt 0.1g

Spinach & squash salad with coconut dressing

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS PLUS INFUSING ● COOK 40 MINS Easy

Low fat 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

1 large butternut squash or pumpkin, deseeded but skin left on
2 tbsp olive oil
1 large red onion, sliced into thin rings
2 limes, zest of 1, juice of both
80ml coconut cream
2 tsp fish sauce
1 tsp golden caster sugar
200g baby leaf spinach

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Cut the squash into bite-sized pieces, toss with the oil and seasoning, then roast for 30-40 mins until golden and tender. Leave to cool.
2 Toss the onion rings with the juice of 1 lime and set aside while the squash roasts.
3 Make the dressing. Whisk together the remaining lime juice, the zest, coconut cream, fish sauce and sugar. Cover and leave to infuse in the fridge for 10-15 mins, or until ready to serve. When ready to eat, toss together the squash, spinach and onions, and serve with a generous drizzle of the dressing.

PER SERVING 114 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 12g, fat 5g, sat fat 2g, fibre 4g, sugar 7g, salt 0.4g >>



Christmas crumble friands

MAKES 12 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy

FOR THE CRUMBLE TOP
2 tbsp butter
50g plain flour
Small handful of flaked almonds
2 tbsp demerara sugar
½ tsp ground cinnamon
Seeds from 5 cardamom pods, finely ground
FOR THE BATTER
140g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
50g plain flour
140g ground almonds
175g icing sugar, sifted, plus extra to dust (optional)
¼ tsp each of baking powder and salt
½ tsp ground cinnamon
2 tangy eating apples, ideally red-skinned
4 large egg whites

1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Make the crumble top first. Rub the butter and flour together until they look like rough breadcrumbs. Stir in the almonds, demerara sugar, cinnamon and a pinch of the cardamom, saving the rest for the friand batter.
2 Melt the butter, then let it cool for 5 mins. Meanwhile, generously grease the wells of a 12-hole friand tin (or a deep non-stick muffin tin). Sift the dry ingredients for the friands, including the remaining ground cardamom, into a large bowl. Also add the rougher bits of almond that collect in the sieve.
3 Cut 12 thin half-moons from 1 apple, then peel and chop the rest of the fruit into small pieces. Put the egg whites in a separate bowl and whisk until thick, foamy and doubled in size, but not stiff.
4 Using a spatula or large metal spoon, fold the whites into the dry ingredients, then fold in the melted butter until even, followed by the chopped apple. Divide the batter between the tin and top with the crumble, then poke in the apple slices. Bake for 25 mins or until golden and risen. I find it best to let the friands cool in the tin, then carefully ease them out with a palette knife. Best on the day they are made, but will keep in an airtight tin for 2 days, or freeze for 1 month.

PER friand 304 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 27g, fat 19g, sat fat 8g, fibre 1g, sugar 20g, salt 0.2g GI





A *Festive Season* to Remember

It's that time of the year where families and friends come together to celebrate and experience the enchanting power of the holidays. From tantalizing Christmas celebrations to unforgettable New Year's Eve parties, it's sure to be an everlasting memory with us this season.

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Make your own edible centrepiece

Complete your festive table setting with a candy apple Christmas tree centrepiece, which everyone will love tucking into at the end of the meal! Arnaud Souchet, Executive Pastry Chef of Fairmont The Palm, Dubai, shows us how. Photographs ANAS CHERUR





French native Arnaud Souchet got his qualification in Pastry cuisine in 2001, before working in restaurants across France, UK and Greece. He moved to the Middle East in 2011 and previously worked at Jumeirah at Etihad Towers. He took up the Executive Pastry Chef position at Fairmont the Palm earlier this year.

Candy apple Christmas tree

SERVES 6 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS A little effort

3kg sugar
210ml water
12 medium-sized red apples
Pinch of red food colouring powder
Pinch of white food colouring powder
Edible gold leaves, to garnish (optional)

YOU WILL NEED
12 wooden skewers
Silicone cookie sheet liner or a baking tray lined with a baking sheet
Snowflake shaped mould
Kitchen thermometer

1 Bring the sugar and water to a boil over medium heat in a saucepan. Gently stir until the sugar has dissolved completely in water to form a thick syrup. Split the mixture by reserving 500ml of the sugar syrup for the snowflake. Monitor the temperature of the rest of the sugar syrup with a kitchen thermometer. When it reaches 145C, add a pinch of the red food colouring powder and stir gently. Continue to boil the syrup until the kitchen thermometer reads 152C. Remove from heat and pour into a heat proof bowl. Set aside to cool.

2 Insert the wooden skewers into the apple centre (stem). Swirl each apple in the red sugar syrup to coat completely, and place on the silicone cookie sheet liner to set – this takes about 3-4 mins. You can also refrigerate it for 15 mins.

3 Add a pinch of the white food colouring powder to the reserved sugar syrup and stir gently.

4 Spray the snowflake mould with cooking spray and pour about 100ml white sugar syrup into the mould, on the silicone cooking sheet. Set aside for 15 mins.

5 Remove the skewers from the apples, and dip each apple in the sauce to help them stick to each other. Begin with about five apples for the base, and then form the tree in a layered triangular shape by placing the apples on top of each other. The flat side of the apples should face outward.

6 Remove the snowflake carefully from the mould and smear red sugar syrup to one side of it – in the center. Stick the snowflake to the apple tree, and sprinkle gold leaves all over.

PER SERVING (1 apple, excluding snowflake) 268 kcals, protein 0.3g, carbs 69.5g, fat 0g, sat fat 0g, fibre 1.4g, sugar 66.5g, salt 0g GI

Text and styling by NICOLA MONTEATH

Star bakes

Try our gorgeous new bakes, from a fresh twist on stollen to our glamorous cover star, this festive season!

Recipes CASSIE BEST Photographs WILL HEAP

Our **cover recipe!**



Chocolate orange & cranberry red velvet bombe, recipe p76



Hazelnut crunch mince pies, recipe p76

Chocolate orange & cranberry red velvet bombe



SERVES 15 ● PREP 1 HR 10 MINS PLUS CHILLING ● COOK 45 MINS

More of a challenge ❄ UNFILLED AND UN-ICED CAKES ONLY

175g butter, very soft, plus extra for greasing
200g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
200g golden caster sugar
4 large eggs
2 tbsp cocoa
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1½ tsp baking powder
75g buttermilk
2 tsp vanilla extract
20g red food colouring
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
FOR THE GANACHE AND FILLING
450ml double cream
Zest of 2 oranges
100g white chocolate, finely chopped
100g dark chocolate, finely chopped
200g milk chocolate, finely chopped
180g cream cheese
3 tbsp icing sugar
50g dried cranberries, plus extra to serve
Sprinkles and edible glitter (optional)

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Grease 2 x 16cm hemisphere cake tins, then dust with flour and shake out the excess. Stand the tins on two ramekins placed on a baking tray to hold them steady. Put the cake ingredients in a large mixing bowl, add a pinch of salt and whisk together until smooth and evenly coloured bright red. Divide the mixture between the two tins and bake for 45 mins. Remove and cool in the tins for 10 mins, then tip onto a wire rack and leave until completely cold.

2 Make the chocolate-orange ganache and the filling. Pour the cream into a saucepan, add the orange zest and heat until just steaming. Put half the white chocolate in a bowl, and the dark and milk chocolates in another bowl. Pour 50ml of the hot cream over the white chocolate (strain it if the orange zest is in big strands), and the remaining cream over the dark and milk mixture. Leave for 1-2 mins, then stir until smooth and glossy. Set aside to cool for 10 mins.

3 Put the cream cheese in a bowl and whisk lightly to loosen. Add the icing sugar and the cooled white chocolate and cream mixture, then blend until smooth. Stir through the cranberries, then chill.

4 When the cakes are cold, you can start assembling. With the cakes flat-side up, use a 7cm biscuit cutter to mark a circle in the centre of each. Use a spoon to gently scoop a dip in each cake, about 4cm deep (save the crumbs for cake truffles – see tip, right) Remove the cream cheese mixture from the fridge and use to fill the cavities in the cakes, spreading a little onto the flat surfaces too, to help them stick together. Invert 1 cake onto the other to create a sphere, and place on a wire rack set over a baking tray (this will catch any chocolate drips).

5 To ice the cake, the chocolate ganache needs to be the right consistency – pourable but not too runny. If it has set too much, microwave for 10-20 secs, then mix until smooth; if it is too runny, chill until it has firmed up a little. Pour half the ganache over the cake, to cover the sides and run into the tray below (use the chocolate drips for cake truffles). Cover the whole surface using a palette knife. This is the first coating, so won't fill the gap between the sponges. Chill the cake for 20 mins or until the ganache has firmed up a little.

6 Remove the cake from the fridge. Cover the gap around the middle with the ganache, smoothing all over with a palette knife. Referigerate for another 20 mins until firm, and transfer to a serving plate.

7 Melt the remaining white chocolate in the microwave in short 10-sec bursts. Drizzle over the top of the cake, then scatter the cranberries, sprinkles and edible glitter, if you like. *Chill if not serving straight away – it will keep in the fridge for up to 2 days. Remove from the fridge 30 mins before serving.*

PER SERVING 537 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 40g, fat 38g, sat fat 23g, fibre 2g, sugar 30g, salt 0.7g

CAKE TRUFFLES

Crumble the unused cake crumbs into a bowl and mix in the leftover chocolate ganache (microwave first if it has set). Scoop into balls and roll into small truffles. Dust in cocoa and chill until ready to eat.

Hazelnut crunch mince pies



MAKES 12 ● PREP 30 MINS PLUS CHILLING ● COOK 20 MINS

Easy ❄

FOR THE PASTRY
250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
100g hazelnuts, chopped
75g icing sugar, plus extra for dusting
140g cold butter, cut into cubes
1 egg, separated
FOR THE FILLING
400g good-quality mincemeat
1 small eating apple, grated
Zest of 1 orange

1 Put the flour, half the hazelnuts, the icing sugar and butter in a food processor and blitz to a sandy texture. Add the egg yolk and 1-2 tbsp water, and blitz briefly until the dough clumps together. Tip onto a work surface and knead the dough a little until smooth. Flatten to a puck shape, wrap in cling film, chill for 30 mins.

2 Mix the mincemeat, apple and orange zest. Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured surface to 3mm thickness. Stamp 12 circles with a 10cm fluted biscuit cutter and line a 12-hole muffin tin.

3 Fill each pie with the mincemeat. Re-roll the pastry trimmings to the same thickness as before. Stamp out 6 circles using an 8cm cutter, and 6 stars. Put the remaining hazelnuts in a dish and lightly whisk the egg white in another. Brush a little egg white around the inner rim of each pie, then brush one side of each pastry lid, and the stars. Press each lid into the hazelnuts, egg-side down, so they stick, then lightly press on top of the pies, nutty-side up. Repeat with the stars and place these on the remaining pies.

4 Bake for 20 mins or until golden and crisp. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 mins, then scoop out and cool on a wire rack. Dust with icing sugar before serving. *Will keep in a sealed container for 3 days.*

PER PIE 347 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 43g, fat 17g, sat fat 7g, fibre 2g, sugar 27g, salt 0.2g >>

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Spiced stollen plait

CUTS INTO 15 SLICES ● PREP 50 MINS PLUS PROVING AND RISING ● COOK 30 MINS More of a challenge

140g mixed dried fruit (we used raisins, sultanas and dried cherries)
4 tbsp brandy, dark rum or orange juice
225ml full-fat milk
3 tbsp clear honey
85g butter, cut into cubes
450g strong plain flour, plus extra for dusting
7g sachet fast-action dried yeast
½ nutmeg, finely grated
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp mixed spice
1 large egg, beaten, plus 1 to glaze
Zest of 1 lemon
Zest of 1 orange
Oil, for greasing
300g marzipan
Handful of flaked almonds
Icing sugar, for dusting

1 Put the dried fruit in a bowl with the brandy, rum or orange juice, cover with cling film and microwave on High for 1 min. Set aside to cool while you make the dough.
2 Pour the milk and honey into a pan and heat until they just come to the boil, then remove from the heat, add the butter and set aside to cool a little, swirling now and then to melt the butter. Meanwhile, mix the flour, yeast, spices and ½ tsp salt in a large bowl.
3 When the milk has cooled to body temperature, pour into the flour bowl. Add the egg and zest, and mix together with a spoon, then with your hands, until the mixture comes together as a dough. If it's a little sticky, add a little extra flour.
4 Tip out onto your lightly floured work surface and knead for 10 mins or until smooth and elastic. Transfer to a clean, lightly greased bowl, cover with greased cling film and leave to prove for 2 hrs or until doubled in size. You can put the dough in the fridge for up to 2 days at this point; just bring back to room temperature before continuing.
5 When the dough has doubled in size, tip out onto the work surface and knock out the air bubbles. Knead in the soaked fruit.
6 Roll the dough into a square, roughly 40 x 40cm, then cut into 3 long strips. Break the marzipan into 3 balls, then roll each to the same length as the strips of dough. Put 1 marzipan sausage on top of each strip of dough, then pinch the sides of the dough together to encase the marzipan – so you have 3 long sausages of marzipan-filled dough. Flip the dough over so the seams are underneath, then pinch the 3 ends together. Tightly plait the dough, pinching together to seal when you finish. Place the plait on a baking tray lined with baking parchment, tucking the ends under for a neat finish. Cover loosely with a sheet of oiled cling film, leave to prove for 30 mins-1 hr or until doubled in size.
7 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Uncover the plait, brush with the beaten egg and sprinkle over the almonds. Bake on the middle shelf of the oven for 30 mins until golden brown and cooked through. Transfer to a wire rack to cool and dust with icing sugar before serving. *Will keep for up to 5 days in a sealed container.*

PER Slice 330 kcals, protein 7g, carbs 47g, fat 11g, sat fat 4g, fibre 2g, sugar 26g, salt 0.3g >>



Gingerbread Bûche de Noël

CUTS INTO 10-12 SLICES ● PREP 35 MINS ● COOK 12 MINS A little effort

50g butter, plus extra for greasing
50g treacle
50g golden syrup
2 balls stem ginger, finely grated, plus 2 tbsp of the syrup
4 large eggs
100g dark muscovado sugar, plus extra for dusting
100g plain flour
¼ tsp baking powder
2 tsp ground ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon

FOR THE ICING
200g butter, softened
300g icing sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract
3 tbsp ginger syrup, from the stem ginger jar
White pearl sprinkles, to decorate

1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Grease and line a 20 x 30cm Swiss roll tin with baking parchment, then grease the parchment a little too. Put the treacle, syrup, butter and stem ginger in a pan, heat until melted and stir to combine, then set aside to cool a little.

2 Put the eggs and sugar in a bowl and whisk using an electric hand whisk until light, mousse-like and doubled in size – this will take about 10 mins. The mixture is ready when it holds a ribbon trail from the beaters for 3 secs. Sift over the flour, baking powder and spices, then pour the melted butter mixture around the sides of the bowl so that it trickles down into the whisked eggs. Very gently fold everything together with a large metal spoon. When just combined, pour the mixture into the Swiss roll tin and ease it into the corners. Bake for 12 mins until just cooked.

3 While the sponge is cooking, lay a sheet of baking parchment, big enough to fit the cake, on your work surface and dust with a little sugar. Once cooked, tip the cake directly onto the parchment. Use a small serrated knife to score a line about 2cm from one of the shorter ends, making sure you don't cut all the way through – this will help to get a tight roll. Gently roll up from this end, rolling the parchment between the layers. Leave to cool like this on a wire rack to help set the shape.

4 To make the icing, put the ingredients in a bowl and whisk until smooth. Transfer to a piping bag fitted with a large round nozzle, or use a plastic sandwich bag and snip off one corner to make a hole about 1cm wide. Unroll the sponge and drizzle the surface with 2 tbsp ginger syrup. Pipe a layer of ginger buttercream over the inside of the roll, then use the paper underneath to help tightly re-roll into a roulade. Slice off both ends for a neat finish. The Bûche can be frozen at this point – simply re-roll in the parchment, then in foil, and freeze. Defrost at room temperature before continuing.

5 Place the Bûche on a serving plate or board. Use the remaining icing to pipe a thick layer over the top of the sponge, zigzagging backwards and forwards to create a tight concertina pattern. Decorate with white pearl sprinkles, if you like. *The Bûche will keep in a sealed container for up to 5 days, or can be frozen for up to two months.*

PER SLICE (12) 80 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 48g, fat 19g, sat fat 11g, fibre none, sugar 42g, salt 0.5g

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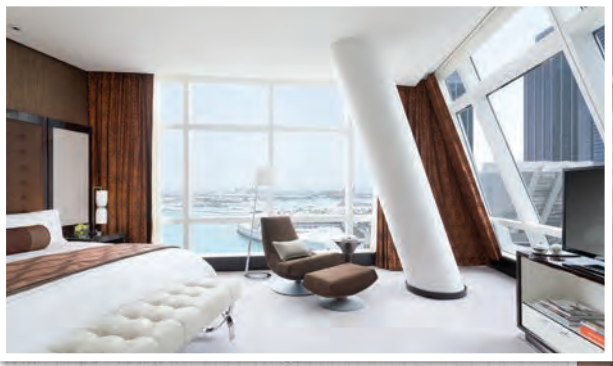
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IN THIS SECTION

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BBC goodfood Middle East

Winter-proof your diet

Supercharge your diet now with nutrient-packed fruit and veg, says nutritional therapist Kerry Torrens.

One of the most straightforward ways to boost your health is with a colourful diet of seasonal fruit and veg. Each colour family represents a different set of beneficial plant chemicals, so the more of a rainbow you eat, the better (see our guide, right).

Although you can't beat fresh-from-the-garden produce all the time, especially in this part of the world, for nutrient quality, frozen and canned fruit and veg all count towards your five-a-day. Just make sure that you avoid fruits in sugary syrups.

And when fresh food is less readily available, a well-stocked storecupboard is key to good health. Here are four staples to keep to hand:

Muesli Packed with zinc-rich oats, nuts and seeds. Low levels of zinc can cause an imbalance in the white blood cells which help you to fight infection. Choose a low sugar version or mix your own.

Tinned tomatoes Cooked and processed tomatoes are richer in the protective antioxidant lycopene, which helps to minimise cell damage and aids cholesterol management.

Ginger The active compound, gingerol, boosts immune cells and is especially good for respiratory infections, coughs and colds.

Cinnamon A warming spice with antioxidant properties, which works well combined with honey.

Don't Stint On Breakfast

On colder mornings, a good breakfast is a vital start to the day.

Porridge with yoghurt Top porridge with a dollop of live yoghurt to up levels of friendly gut bacteria, add some vitamin C-rich berries and finish with cinnamon.

Salmon toast-topper Top toasted rye bread with flakes of poached salmon – an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, which helps to keep your immune system functioning well. Serve with grilled tomatoes – they're rich in antioxidants.

Poached eggs with winter greens Packed with protein and a good source of vitamin D, eggs keep you fuller for longer. For a weekend treat, serve poached with winter greens such as chard for its immune-friendly vitamin C, E, beta-carotene and zinc.

Photographs ROB STREETER | Food styling JULIA AZZARELLO | Styling SUE ROWLANDS

CREATE A RAINBOW ON YOUR PLATE

CRANBERRIES AND POMEGRANATES



Rich in plant compounds known as tannins, these fruits boost your immune system and have protective properties.
How to eat Snack on dried cranberries or add fresh or frozen to smoothies. Add pomegranate seeds to rice and couscous dishes.

MUSHROOMS



All varieties support your immune system, thanks to a compound called lentinan. Asian varieties like shiitake and oyster mushrooms are especially rich.
How to eat Best eaten lightly cooked.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS, BROCCOLI AND KALE



These winter superfoods are a richer source of vitamin C than citrus fruits. They also supply vitamin K, which helps to make the most of the vitamin D in your diet. Vitamin D helps manage your immune system, which allows you to fight off bacteria and viruses.
How to eat Lightly cook to minimise nutrient loss.

SATSUMAS, ORANGES AND TANGERINES



Rich in bioflavonoids, which help vitamin C work more effectively. These plant compounds are rich in the skin and pithy membranes.
How to eat Enjoy the juice, flesh and skin. Add zest to a cup of black tea, grate over yoghurt, muesli or put on top of steamed veg before serving.

ONIONS, LEEKS AND GARLIC



This veg family supplies us with allicin which helps to stop viruses in their tracks.
How to eat Finely chop and leave to sit for 5-10 minutes – this activates an enzyme that helps to promote the allicin content. Then lightly cook or, if you're brave enough, enjoy raw!

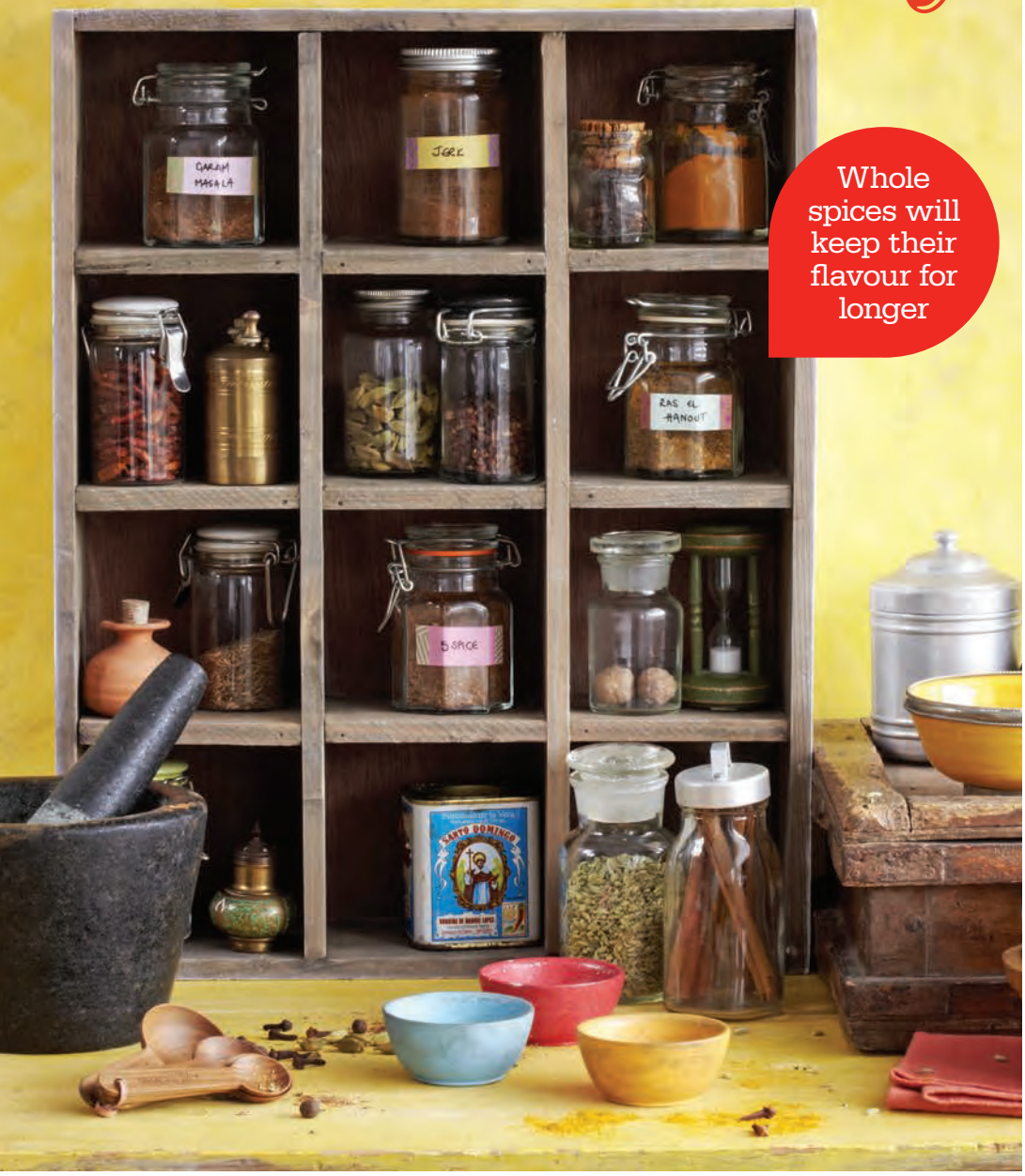
RED CABBAGE



Packed with the same protective anthocyanins as blueberries, these plant compounds not only have anti-aging properties but help your immune system to work more effectively, protecting you from viral infection.
How to eat Enjoy raw in a winter slaw or braise and serve with meat or fish.

DO I NEED A SUPPLEMENT? Supplements should complement a varied, balanced diet, and not be a replacement for poor eating habits. But if you're prone to infections, you could bolster your defences with a course of probiotics. Also, studies suggest that vitamin C and zinc may help you to recover from a cold more quickly, and an all-round multivitamin and mineral can support your immune defences when you're under extra pressure.

SPICE story



Whole spices will keep their flavour for longer



Nicola and Abeda get hands-on with the spices at the souq

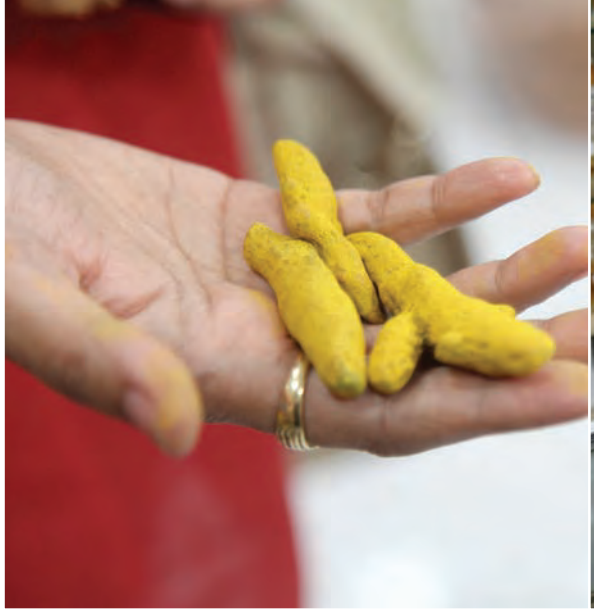
Nicola Monteath goes on a journey with spice expert, Abeda Oturkar, to one of Dubai's oldest and most bustling markets, the Deira spice souk, to learn about the uses and benefits of some unusual kinds of spices.

The UAE's trade history is rooted in spices, as ships and dhows came into the Dubai Creek to sell what they acquired from spice-producing countries. "This region was very fortunate, and traded spices since the 12th century – the Arabs actually had a monopoly over spices at one point," says Abeda Oturkar, Food educator, chef, restaurateur and an expert on spices (facebook.com/TasteBudsTravels). Back in the day, spices were sold out of bags, right near the dhows and ships. But around 60 years ago, this souk was built to allow everyone to come to one place to shop.

The Deira Spice Souk has since paved the way for shopkeepers who sell everything from saffron to frankincense and infused teas, and still retains its age-old charm. Bustling wooden archways, narrow walkways with buckets of vibrant spices kept outside each store, and men – mostly Iranian, Indian or Pakistani – trying to persuade you into buying the wide variety of spices on offer, are just some of what you will see and experience. Perhaps, the best part of it all though, is that you can touch, smell and try the spices, and haggle with the store keepers – most of the spices, nuts, and teas are available at wholesale or reasonable prices.

Our first stop was in a little shop selling dark red dry chillies, buckets of sunflower extracts – which look similar to saffron – dried flowers, and heaps of spice powders like cumin, paprika, chilli, and turmeric. At the souk, you will be exposed to spices in a whole different light, as they are sold in its whole form – something you may not come across in a supermarket. Abeda picks up dried chamomile and tells me that it is used in teas for its medicinal values. She then spots dried ginger, a pungent and spicy root, available here in its dry form. "Ginger was once used only in dried forms, as fresh ones couldn't be carried for months in caravans," she says. It is traditionally used in Indian and Chinese medicine, as the spicy root, found at the Himalayan foothills of Northern India, China and Tibet, is anti-inflammatory and has several other beneficial health properties. Fresh or dried ginger can be mixed with garlic, onions, and tomatoes in curries,

Photographs ANAS CHERUR













or added to wok-style dishes. It is also mixed with tea, and can be rubbed onto meat to help tenderise it while adding flavour.

I picked up a strange looking piece of yellow root, which Abeda pointed out was turmeric. Surprised to hear, as I had only ever seen it as a powder, I found out that it is a root similar to ginger and galangal, and is solid at first but then ground to powder. "In the ancient days of spice trading, turmeric was highly valued as it is anti-fungal, and keeps diseases at bay," she says. This spice is native to India, and is a common ingredient in Asian cuisine where it's used in curries, rubbed onto fish for its bright yellow colour, added to onions to synergistically help protect against cancer, and to lentils, among other dishes.

While walking from store to store, Abeda told me that not all spices came from Asia, in fact some arrived from South American countries. "Chillies were never in Asia, they were in fact indigenous to South and Central American places like Mexico, Brazil and Peru. But when Columbus found it, he took it back with him on his first voyage and cultivated it along the Mediterranean coast, India and China," she tells us. Chilli powder can be found in Mexican, Brazilian, Indian, Thai and European cuisine, and this hot and pungent spice was naturally found in all the shops. A variety of chilli powders like Kashmiri and cayenne are available as well.

Another lesser known item we came across was mace, a yellow-ish leaf that usually covers nutmeg shells. This is used in dishes, either ground for cooking, or to make an oil (to help with toothaches). Mace has a strong aroma and is one of the most expensive ingredients after saffron and green cardamom. It hails from the tropical rain forests in Indonesia, and Spice Islands like Maluku. Abeda recommends buying whole nutmeg, to use it grated in stews, sauces and soups. The spice is also part of spice mixes like garam masala powder, and the Moroccan spice mix, Ras el hannout. Small green coriander seeds were kept in boxes along with other spices in some stores – the spellings are sure to make you laugh! These tiny, nutty seeds which give out a great fragrance, and soothe the digestive system, can be used to make a classic Moroccan rub (for roast lamb) with garlic, butter and paprika, or whole in casseroles and vinaigrettes.

Towards one corner of the Spice Souk, you will find a shop which solely sells saffron and oud. Abeda highly recommends this store for good quality saffron; this bright orange-red coloured spice hardly needs an introduction. But for those who don't already know, it is the dried stigma of the flower Crocus sativus. Saffron is originally from Southern Europe (therefore, a key ingredient in Spanish paella, for example), but it is now cultivated in Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Turkey, Iran, and Jammu and Kashmir. "Just a pinch of fresh saffron enhances the flavours of a dish," she says. Abeda recommends soaking a pinch of saffron in 4 tablespoons of hot water or milk, and then adding it a dish, to extract the most flavour, colour and aroma out of it. Persian and Mughlai cuisine use it in pilafs, biryanis and rice puddings, and in India, it is sometimes used in falooda, drinks and cakes as well.

While the Souk has tons of spices to offer, it also sells gorgeous retro-style boxes of tea in flavours like rose, cardamom, ginger, and chocolate, which are available at popular tea boutiques in Dubai – buy them here for quarter the price! And when you need a quick pick-me-up, stop by one of the small hole-in-the-wall juice stands for a hydrating coconut water, fresh orange or mango juice. You will also find alcohol-free perfumes, oils and ouds. But whether you're looking to buy spices for cooking, or not, we highly recommend a walk through the market to smell the aromas, bask in the atmosphere, and chat to shopkeepers that have been around for more than 40 to 50 years, to get a real insight into the world of spices. >>

Make your own spice mix

For each of these mixes, toast the whole spices in a pan until aromatic and a shade or two darker. This really enhances the flavours. Tip into a spice grinder (or use a pestle and mortar), then add any ground spices and dried herbs and crush to a powder. Store in a sealed jar for up to six months.
All spices make 1 small jar

Five-spice

Used widely in Chinese cooking, five-spice is an ancient spice mix, combining the flavours of sweet cinnamon and cloves, liquorice-scented fennel seeds and star anise, and tongue-tingling Sichuan pepper. Use sparingly – it's a potent mix.

2 tbsp ground cinnamon or 2 cinnamon sticks
1 tbsp fennel seeds
6 star anise
2 tsp Sichuan peppercorns
1 tsp whole cloves

Garam masala

Garam masala is an aromatic mixture of spices, used as a base in many Indian dishes to bring flavour and warmth. The combination of spices varies from region to region, and even between different households.

2 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tbsp cumin seeds
2 tsp black peppercorns
2 tsp ground cinnamon or ½ a cinnamon stick
1 tsp cardamom seeds (seeds from about 20 pods)
1 tsp fennel seeds
½ tsp whole cloves
4 dried bay leaves

Ras el hanout

A North African medley of fragrant spices, ras el hanout translates as 'head of the shop', and is traditionally a blend of each spicemonger's best spices – some blends contain up to 15 ingredients. We've created a much simpler version. If you want to make it more traditional, add some dried, crushed rose petals.

2½ tbsp cumin seeds
2 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tbsp ground cinnamon or 1 cinnamon stick
2 tsp ground ginger
2 tsp black peppercorns
1 tsp ground turmeric
½ tsp cardamom seeds (seeds from about 10 pods)
Good pinch of saffron (optional)



TRY THIS

Spiced lamb koftas with mint & tomato salad

MAKES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS

Easy | Low cal | Vit C | 2 of 5-a-day | Gluten Free

FOR THE KOFTAS
500g pack lean lamb mince
2 small or 1 large preserved lemon, flesh and seeds removed and skin finely chopped
10 pitted green olives, finely chopped
Small bunch of parsley, chopped
1½ tbsp ras el hanout spice mix
1 tbsp vegetable oil
Yoghurt, salad and wraps (optional)

FOR THE SALAD
4 large tomatoes, chopped
½ red onion, very finely sliced
Small bunch of mint, leaves picked
Juice of ½ lemon
Good pinch of sugar

1 In a large bowl, combine the lamb mince, preserved lemon, olives, parsley, ras el hanout and some seasoning – don't be too generous with salt, as the lemon and olives are both quite salty. Divide the mixture into 4 and shape each piece around a long skewer. Chill for 30 mins.
2 Combine the ingredients for the salad with some seasoning and set aside. Heat the grill to high. Rub the oil over the koftas and wrap a little foil around the bottom of each skewer if you're using wooden ones. Place on a baking tray and grill for about 7 mins each side until nicely browned, checking the meat is cooked through to the centre. Serve with the tomato salad, a dollop of yoghurt and some couscous or in wraps, if you like.

PER SERVING 329 kcals, protein 26g, carbs 9g, fat 21g, sat fat 8g, fibre 3g, sugar 8g, salt 1.1g

Tempura?





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MY KITCHEN

John loves the rugged, industrial look of his kitchen

John Whaite

The 2012 winner of hit BBC show, Great British Bake Off, shows Holly Brooke-Smith round his small but stylish kitchen.

Photographs GEOFF WILKINSON

After winning the BBC's Great British Bake Off in 2012, John Whaite enrolled on a patisserie course at the prestigious cookery school Le Cordon Bleu, and he's since set up an online artisan chocolate shop, The Hungry Dog. His second book, *John Whaite Bakes at Home* (Headline books), was released earlier this year. He and his partner live in south-east London.

How long have you been here?

We moved in nearly two years ago. We did about five trips between here and Manchester to get everything, and most of that was kitchen items. The kitchen cupboards are bursting at the seams with all my stuff – Paul, my partner, hardly has anything in here!

Are you making many changes?

The previous owner had done up the kitchen and it's all fairly modern. But still, it's an inherited kitchen and we want to put our stamp on it. We need to change the oven – it's really old and the temperature markers have rubbed off. The hob is gas though, so I'm happy about that.

Do you always cook on gas?

Actually, I've never had gas before – I've either had induction or electric plates, but gas is much more manageable and straightforward to use, although induction is easier to clean. I think I'm going to get a black ceramic gas hob, which is simple to wipe all the spills off.

How do you work in the kitchen?

I do all my work in here – my second book was entirely written and tested in this room. That's why I have my computer in the kitchen, so I can write down a recipe and change the copy straight away, otherwise I'd forget to make changes. When I'm working, I have classical music on – it's almost like revision because I need to completely focus. If the doorbell goes I get a bit stressed out, and I have to unplug the phone and turn off my mobile.

So are you a perfectionist?

It takes a lot of organisation to be a perfectionist! I'm more of a 'lazy perfectionist' and I have to really force myself to lay everything out and get my 'mise-en-place' done, or make sure I have a schedule of how and when I'm going to get everything finished. But if I'm cooking just for supper or for my mates, then I'll go ahead and throw everything together.

You've got so many mixers!

I use all of these for my cookery classes. I have a big 6.9-litre one for brioche and bread – I like to make a bulk batch of dough to part-bake and then freeze. When I do a brioche mix, it's good to have that extra movement in the bigger bowls.My smaller mixer is better for when I'm making frangipane and cake batters because it picks up every last bit of mixture in the bowl, more effectively than the bigger one.

What's your essential kit?

When you start baking, you don't really need









anything other than a wooden spoon and a good bowl. But once you start to expand your horizons, that's when you begin to use things like a piping bag. Flan rings are a must-have in my kitchen, and really strong anodised aluminium trays that don't bend or break in the oven. I've built up a good set of nozzles, and I like to have the little extras like non-toxic glitter or gold leaf, which can really transform a basic tart.

Who's on your bookshelf?

I adore Richard Bertinet. His book *Dough* (Kyle Cathie) is without a doubt the best on the shelves. It's very reliable and it goes into sufficient depth for you to be able to really understand bread and have the confidence to create your own bakes. Michael Ruhlman's book *Ratio* (Scribner) is also great because it helps you to appreciate how the proportions of baking work. Once you've learnt them, you can apply the rules to any ingredients, and that's when you become a baker.

Do you have a scientific approach to baking?

I never thought I understood baking in that technical way until I started giving demos – then I realised I knew all these tips. Like, the three types of aeration are chemical (baking powder), mechanical (a mixer) and biological (yeast growth). People can be put off by the idea that it's a science, but really it's just about experimentation – getting things wrong and using that to be creative.

So what's on your to-do list for the kitchen?

I want to put up a whole wall of narrow shelves all the way to the ceiling, with a sliding ladder. I have this romantic image of being able to hop up my ladder to grab a bag of flour. In the middle of the room, I'd like an island, so I can socialise with friends while I'm cooking. We also want to get a rail made, for hanging pans across the blackboard.

GET THE LOOK



Give your kitchen a retro-touch, as John does, with this KitchenAid Artisan 1.5 litre Kettle. Dhs845 at Al Ghandi Electronics.



This Ceramic Plate is a great bargain, and ideal for everyday use. Dhs7 at Daiso.



Dress your countertop, as well as your salads and pastas, with this gorgeous Carluccio's Extra Virgin Olive Oil bottle! Dhs135 at Carluccio's.



Bake a batch of cookies to perfection in this Excelle Elite Cookie Pan. Dhs65 at Wilton.

Deck the halls, Set the table...

Colour code your festive table with a distinct style this season. Experts share their tips on perfectly recreating three different table setting looks.

EXPERT PANEL



Kai Steffan, Creative Director at Villeroy and Boch



Ryan Dang, Design Director at Indigo Living



Michelle Dinsmore, Head Visual Merchandiser at Home Centre

Classic colours

The red, green and gold colour combination is a classic look for Christmas, and is a great colour scheme if you're looking to recreate a traditional, homely vibe. But if done wrong, it can make your dining table look gawdy, rather than elegant. The aim is to have the right balance, and keep everything on the table simple, with touches of red, gold and green seen in smaller elements on the table, rather than in the larger centerpieces or dishes, and keeping the base colours muted, while staying in the same family of hues.

TOP TIPS:

- "Take a large tree branch from your garden or neighbourhood park, and use it as a centrepiece Decorate it with red ribbons, bows, and of course, decorations. Place round red candles in a small vase wrapped with twigs and festive holly, to add warmth and light to the table. If using white dinner plates, place a small welcome gift on each plate which comprises of a red cone filled with chocolates." - *Kai*
- "A sheer green glass brimming with red berries makes a striking display, and adds to the festive mood." - *Ryan*
- "Add splashes of red to the table, by placing red bands and serviettes along with dinner plates." - *Michelle*

SHOP THE STYLE



Red berry candle ring, Dhs139 at Indigo Living

Wreath (24 inch) with poinsettia and red baubles, Dhs149 at Ace



Red linen flatware pouch, Dhs15 at Crate and Barrel



Text by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs: SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM





Winter wonderland

Blue and silver, a modern classic, is almost as evocative of Christmas as the previous look. When decorating the table, you don't have to stick to shades of light blue. Play around with the colour scheme, and mix it up with dark and light tones from the same colour palette. There's no better way to recreating the winter wonderland vibe than with these colours. Adding a hint of contrasting or complementary colours – think pale pink or lavender – will save the look from being too one-dimensional. Just make sure you don't go overboard with the silver as it should be used subtly.

TOP TIPS:

❄ "Use a dark blue linen cloth as a base for your festive table, with matching napkins, to ensure your decoration stands out. You can also create a picturesque winter feel by offsetting white tableware with light blue table linen, and adding tall crystal candle holders to add height to the table – make sure it doesn't obscure the view of your guests though! To add a pop of colour, place pink or purple hyacinths as a floral centrepiece." *- Kai*

❄ "Give the table a sophisticated feel with metallic serve ware, and pressed napkins rolled in silver napkin rings." *- Ryan*

❄ "Once the entire table is set, finish off the look with a festive element like a three-dimensional reindeer or snowman in silver."*- Michelle* >>

SHOP THE STYLE



Montana family set of 27 pcs, Dhs699 at Silica.



Glass tree, Dhs39 at Home Centre.



Pine cone, Dhs49 at Ace.



White christmas

So what if you're in the desert – if you're dreaming of a white Christmas, it can easily be achieved with a few sophisticated elements. All white can start looking too sterile, so go for neutral colours in your linens, retaining the white and crystal for the centrepiece, napkin rings, serving dishes and ornaments. While white and silver are a time-tested combination, touches of gold, or even a hint of copper or bronze can also add instant glamour to a white-themed Christmas table.

TOP TIPS:

* "Decorative lacquer trays and chinaware can be used to serve all your festive fare. To illuminate the space, place white lanterns on the table." - ***Ryan***
* "The main thing to remember is that the table shouldn't be overcrowded. Stick to tableware and linen in hues of silver or gold and white, and intricately weave a string of pearls through crystal candle holders, for a refined touch." - ***Kai***

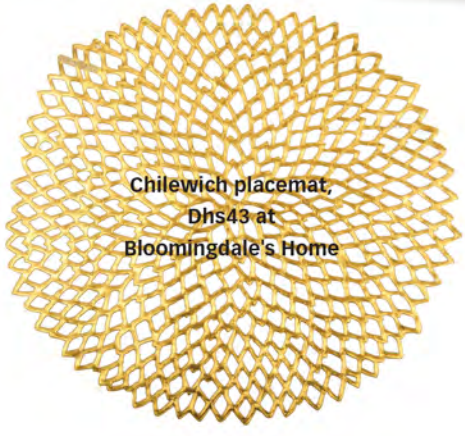
SHOP THE STYLE



YRSNÖ decoration stand, Dhs39 at Ikea.



Confetti appetiser plate and platter, Dhs179 and 29 respectively, at Crate and Barrel.



Chilewich placemat, Dhs43 at Bloomingdale's Home



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Outsource it!

While the festive season inevitably means lots of entertaining at home, it can also mean a lot of stress and hard work if you're trying to do everything yourself. Why not let the pros take over, so you can relax and enjoy your own party? Here's our pick of the top catering service providers in town who guarantee a gourmet experience.





Lafayette events & catering

This French food hall and restaurant also extend their culinary offerings to at-home entertaining. The bespoke service offers a variety of menus to suit different kind of events – whether it's pass-around canapes, or, full buffet meals, sit-down dinners, BBQs, or sharing platters and picnics. Not only that, their range encompasses a variety of international cuisines, and if you don't want to opt for a fully catered event, they also offer Gourmet to go menus (which you can order and pick up or have delivered), as well as Chef at home service.

The service is friendly, flexible and helpful from the get-go, with the team ready to tailor menus according to requirements – although that would hardly be required, with the wide offerings available, with something to suit a variety of palates. A professional chef handles each event, who usually comes across for a site visit prior to the event, to get the lay of the land – as they would take over the home kitchen on the day. All the ingredients are prepped and brought in, then assembled and cooked, ensuring the food is fresh

and beautiful, as well as stylishly presented.

A typical canapé menu can include a mix of cold and hot delicacies like wasabi prawns with mango salsa, tea smoked heritage beef with Waldorf salad, Burrata mozzarella with heirloom tomatoes and balsamic caviar, whipped goat's cheese with black fig purée and candied pistachio – each dish complex and interesting in flavour, and presented with perfection. Slightly more filling dishes, such as noodle boxes – think Singapore fried noodles with BBQ chicken – and mini servings of rice and curry dishes, for example, are also available for cocktail parties, to ensure guests don't leave craving a drive-through burger after the event!

One of their specialties is their bakery section, with gorgeous desserts that are not to be missed – whether it's part of a canapé selection, like Earl grey, chocolate and peach panna cotta, or lemon meringue tart – or as a special celebration cake. They can also create customised cakes, whether it's for a theme, or for a dietary requirement.

Highly professional service staff are included in the package, who ensure the evening run smoothly, and they also offer the basic equipment one would need (such as cocktail tables) at a nominal charge. In short, an event with them will leave your guests impressed, and you only having to worry about your wardrobe for the day!

Best for: A gourmet evening at surprisingly affordable prices.

Get in touch: 04-3399933, www.gallerieslafayette-dubai.com.









Dish catering & events

This is a Dubai-born, family-run brand that has grown from a small, enterprising set-up to become one of the leading catering companies of choice for a variety of luxury brands, and high-end events. But, they are equally adept at smaller, private events, bringing a professional flourish to the (home) table.

While Dish also offers a variety of catering options, including sit-down dinners, they are something of specialists in gourmet canapés, and barbecues (they are Aussie-owned after all!). While they tend not to go off-menu very often, there is plenty of variety in their newly updated menu, which is as creative as it is delicious – from blackened salmon with kale slaw, corn tortilla, chipotle dressing; Vadouvian spiced chicken rice paper roll with cucumber, chilli and mint; and confit duck and wild mushroom roll, peach and vanilla glaze; to bresaola wrapped rabbit loin, roast shallot purée, apricot and fig chutney, to name just a few highlights.

Their Bowl & fork offerings are a must-have, making for a slightly substantial complement to hot and cold canapés – think crisp and succulent John Dory fish & chips with tartare sauce, cooked-to-perfection Momofuku steamed bun with Vietnamese spiced duck with pickle cucumber, and Black angus beef medallions with truffle potato purée, crostini and horseradish jus. They can also set up live cooking stations, ranging from paellas to shawarmas and kababs.

The menu, while international, has a definite Asian twist, and there are also interesting nods to the region's cuisine, in dishes like harissa and rose spiced sea bass with saffron and turmeric couscous, and Turkish delight cheesecake, or a delicately flavoured Middle Eastern spiced tiramisu. Other dessert offerings can vary from chocolate shortbread with truffle mousse, to white chocolate truffles with toasted coconut.

Normal catering services such as staff – who, in this case, are highly-trained and friendly – as well as glassware etc., are offered at a cost. They work closely with their sister company Innovative Hiring which specialises in equipment rentals that are unique and contemporary – such as oil drums for cocktail tables, beanbags, lit wire numbers, and a range of other quirky accessories that will add instant cool-value to any event – making them an ideal choice for a party that you want your guests to remember, both for the food and the atmosphere.

Best for: Themed events with a funky touch.

Get in touch: 04-4221613, www.dish.ae, www.innovativehiring.ae. >>

Ghaf Kitchen

Creating a buzz with their vintage restored Citreon van operations ever since they opened shop earlier this year, this home-grown brand has carved out a unique niche for itself in the catering sector. Founded and run by F&B veterans of the city, who have all previously worked with top restaurants (head chef Adrian Bandyk is ex-Rivington Grill, you do the math!), Ghaf Kitchen is first and foremost, not a food truck. While the truck is an important component of many of their events, and operates as a service kitchen, they do have a fully-fledged kitchen set-up in Al Quoz, and they handle a variety of events, from corporate to house parties.

Offering a primarily British-inspired menu, focusing on seasonal, sustainable ingredients, they do events as small as a sit-down dinner for eight, to cocktail parties for 80. Highlights of the menu include dishes like heirloom tomato salad, lobster with ratte potato, or blue cheese and pear salad with endives for starters; mains can include everything from a beautiful plaice fillet stuffed with crayfish tails, confit fennel and caper sauce, to chicken spatchcock with roasted shallots and chimichurri sauce to name just two. The dessert menu bring their British heritage back into the spotlight, and can include classic Eton Mess and raspberry and elderflower trifle, as well as custards and tarts. However, these menus are not set in stone, and each event can be tailored to individual tastes, with the consistent factor being food that is ingredient-led (they use only sustainable fish, fresh vanilla in the desserts and so on), treated with simplicity, delicacy and respect, with the finesse only an expert can muster up, to produce delicious results. It's high-end restaurant-style dining, which you can enjoy in the comfort of your own home.

Their other specialties include catering for working lunches, afternoon teas, as well as BBQs. The entire service is bespoke, from beginning to end, with personalised attention and service, and the team go to great lengths to ensure the event goes off smoothly. And if the van wasn't unique enough to add character to an event, they also work closely with Desert River (an equipment rental company) to offer distinctive décor set-up options for their events. But, this sort of uniqueness doesn't come cheap, so both their food, as well as the truck rental can add up to a pretty penny.

Best for: Intimate dinner party

Get in touch: 04-4430355, www.ghafkitchen.com.





3 MORE TO TRY

THE IVY@HOME

Enjoy the authentic English turkey Christmas dinner experience courtesy of the experts at Ivy, with minimum fuss and plenty of gastronomic goodness! Their festive takeaway box brings the whole turkey with trimmings and sides package – think cranberry sauce, roast potatoes, Brussel sprouts, pigs in blankets and what have you – wrapped in a festive red ribbon to get you in the mood. The turkey, rather than being a whole bird, is conveniently cut into breast and boned and stuffed leg portions, and all you have to do is finish off the par-cooked food (clear instructions are provided), and in less than an hour, a meal as good as home-cooked is ready on the table. *Dhs999, good for 8 (generous portions). Call 04-3198767.*

1762 CATERING

So much more than a sandwich shop, the gourmet deli also offer catering services, and there's a special festive canapé menu on offer at the moment. Expect delicious treats like crispy filo cups with roasted turkey, turkey sausage rolls with barberries, smoked salmon on potato blinis, as well as mini mince pies, and Christmas spiced pumpkin and cranberry cakes, among others. Holiday platters are also on offer, as well as a regular catering menu. *Call 04-3419779.*

MARTA'S KITCHEN

This bespoke catering company, led by celebrity chef Marta Yanci, offers innovative modern cuisine for their catering operations. *www.martaskitchen.com.*



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Escape for a festive winter holiday at The Carlton Hotel St. Moritz, where you can take in the picturesque views of the mountains in the backdrop, as you enjoy the gorgeous setting among the ski slopes. The ultimate A-list European winter destination, St Moritz is not only a haven for skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, winter hiking, horse-drawn sleigh rides, and various other activities, but also renowned for its glamorous apres-ski lifestyle.

The Carlton Hotel St. Moritz, reopened in 2007 after a major refurbishment in 2007, led by famed interior designer, Carlo Rampazzi, dates back to 1913. The award-winning holiday resort feature suites with views of the stunning St. Moritz Lake among various other updated amenities.

The hotel's culinary offerings include fine dining restaurants Romanoff, which offers authentic Swiss cuisine, and Da Vittorio, an Italian restaurant. Those who want to indulge in the afternoon tea experience, or enjoy a light lunch, can visit the Carlton Bar and Lobby which boasts a large sun terrace. In addition to the food offerings, the hotel is also home to the luxe Carlton Spa which boasts an indoor and outdoor pool, sauna, steam bath, hair salon and a fitness room.

One lucky winner and their partner gets a two-night stay in a Junior Suite, daily breakfast, usage of the spa facilities, and dinner for two at Da Vittorio.

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In which year did The Carlton Hotel St. Moritz get a makeover?

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Match made in chocolate heaven

This winter, Parisian chic takes on a chocolate hue with a pop-up chocolate bar by macaron king Pierre Hermé in the luxe Le Royal Monceau-Raffles Paris hotel. You can enjoy indulgences like exotic hot chocolate flavoured with South American spices, and Chantilly cream, or desserts such as délire délice infiniment praliné noisette (choux pastry, smooth hazelnut cream, caramelised hazelnuts, praline ice cream and hazelnut praline sauce) and azur (chocolate mousse made with candied Kochi yuzu, thin slices of dried lime and yuzu sauce) to name just a few. Reason enough to get on a plane to Paris, we think! The Phillipe Starck-designed venue will be open until March 31, visit www.leroyalmonceau.com.



TASTE OF THE world

All the foodie news from around the globe.

Island festivities with the family

Combine the magic of the festive season with the pleasures of an island paradise at the Viceroy Maldives, where a whole host of activities are planned for the month. Start off the festivities with a Christmas tree decorating session for the kids on Christmas eve, and for the grown-ups it's champagne on the beach followed by a Christmas market-themed dinner featuring everything from turkey to goose and seafood, as well as mulled wine, and even mulled wine sorbet for dessert. Other activities for the break can range from a cooking class with expert chefs, to Christmas movies with popcorn. Cocktail-making lessons are also on offer, as well as beach sports and spa treats. For those staying for a longer break, New Year's Eve will involve a themed masquerade gala dinner with dancing on the beach, and fireworks. Not too shabby a way to bring in the New Year! Room rates start from US$1,870 per night (around Dhs6,860), extra charges apply for festive activities. www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com.

Slow it down in Italy



Escape the frantic pace of December in Dubai to step back in time into an Italian medieval village nestled in exotic Abruzzo. The Sextantio Albergo Diffuso is not so much a hotel as it is a destination recreated by the careful restoration of local huts, to offer a breathtaking rustic-chic atmosphere. The kitchens here offer traditional dishes dating back for generations, using produce from local farms growing Mediterranean ingredients, in a private dining room. Whether it's sampling artisanal cheeses or enjoying the luxuries of handmade products in the hotel, if you're looking for a quintessentially Italian yet unique adventure, this is the place to go to! Room rates start from €100 (around Dhs455), www.designhotels.com/sextantio-albergo-diffuso.



Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED

FROM ARGENTINA TO HONG KONG VIA LONDON!

Popular Argentinian restaurant from London, Gaucho, has opened its first Asian outpost in Hong Kong. Expect the finest cuts sourced from Argentine cattle and the signature cowhide décor of the brand. We hear Gaucho Dubai's head chef Jamie Robertson is over there now setting the scene… www.gauchorestaurants.com

Sydney sensation

Sydney just got a whole lot more exciting with the opening of the new InterContinental Sydney Double Bay, a new luxury hotel in one of the city's poshest suburbs. The hotel's culinary offerings include signature restaurant Stockroom which specialises in unique creations using seasonal, market-fresh produce, plus a contemporary Japanese restaurant Sake Restaurant & Bar, and Henley's Wholefoods, a healthy eating venue. www.ihg.com/intercontinental.

On a chef's trail in New Zealand

Sudeshna Ghosh travelled to the 'land of the long white cloud' to discover the beautiful country and its fabulous produce, with a chef for company. Excerpts from her travel journal.



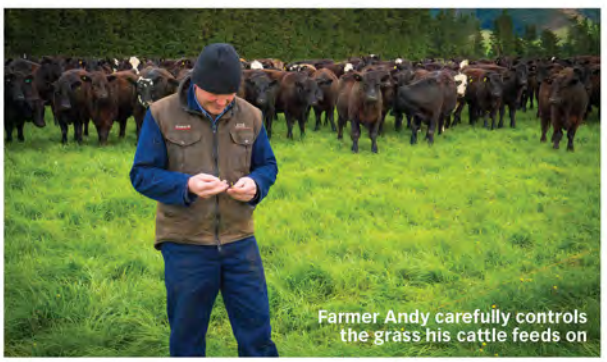
New Zealand cattle get to feast on luscious landscapes!



You're never too far from a photo-op in New Zealand!



Sudeshna traversed the New Zealand countryside with chef Roy, meeting producers (and Merino lamb, seen here) along the way!



Farmer Andy carefully controls the grass his cattle feeds on



Photographs: MICHAEL MORRIS, SUDESHNA GHOSH, and SUPPLIED

Blades of grass. That's how detailed the conversation got, when we were at a cattle farm, investigating exactly what type of grass these happy cows, gazing benevolently at us from their lush pasture, were grazing on (clover and rye, apparently, if you wanted to know!).

This was Day 1 of my trip to New Zealand with chefs Roy Soundranayagam, Group Executive chef of Food Fund International (they're the guys behind Meat Co. and other successful restaurants – so they know a thing or two about their meat) and his protégé Prabakaran Manickam, Area Head Chef, Food Fund International, and winner of last year's Taste New Zealand cooking competition held in Dubai by the New Zealand Trade & Enterprise. I've been to cattle farms before, but never had I learnt so much about what goes into, at the grassroots level (literally!), making a good steak.

I'd only just seen the inside of airports, and a bit of sleepy Christchurch after-dark so far, so our first glimpse into the famed New Zealand countryside was adequately impressive. "It's beautiful! Everything is so green all around," the two chefs gushed like excited schoolboys on a field trip as we cruised through the picturesque Canterbury countryside on the South Island, past miles and miles of rolling green farmland dotted with fat





The Omarama station farm-stay offers the perfect rustic-chic getaway



Rata is a great place to try modern New Zealand cuisine



The Mackenzie basin is one of the country's most scenic spots

furry sheep, and grazing cattle. Seeing the landscape firsthand really brought home the fact that it is for good reason that New Zealand has earned a reputation for high-quality, healthy produce – it is a truly clean, green, pristine environment, there is a sense of abundance everywhere, and you can just feel that the chances of having a lot of nasties put into your food are a lot slimmer here than most other places on this planet. Why would you, when everything tastes so much better when it's natural and fresh?

Back to those cows. After listening to Farmer Andy – owner of one of several family-run farms that produce New Zealand beef – wax eloquent on exactly what type of grass his cows enjoy eating, and how he monitors their diet to ensure optimum health (too much of one type of grass can cause indigestion, didn't you know?) as Chef Roy peppered him with questions, we made our way back to the ANZCO offices, who market this beef, to enjoy a steak lunch.

When travelling with a chef, the question of who does the cooking isn't usually a question even. So Roy happily manned the BBQ in the balcony, and got to work as the sizzling aromas wafted through the boardroom, even as he observed how cooking the meat on a flat cooktop on high temperature gives a good caramelisation, and seals the meat. I usually like my steak with sauces and lots of accompaniments, but this simple meal of tender, juicy, just-grilled slabs of meat, accompanied by a homemade coleslaw, turned out to be unbelievably delicious!

This particular kind of Angus cattle enjoys a free-range life on the pastures, followed by about 120 days on a grain-fed diet – on feed that comes from neighbouring farms, completing a highly sustainable cycle – on a sea-facing feed lot, drinking artesian water that comes directly from the Southern Alps, and their entire life cycle is free from hormones, antibiotics and most importantly, stress. I was sold!

Over lunch, the conversation revolved around everything from global meat prices to off-cuts and everything in between. As we left, the chef asked to try their long-fed beef (200 days of a grain diet), which he reckons might pack in even more flavour.

In fact, throughout our trip, our chats never steered too far away from food, cooking, eating – whether it was swapping stories about the most unusual things we'd eaten, or chef telling me about the menus and new restaurant concepts he'd been planning on his flight in; even as the rest of us feasted on gourmet menus on the Emirates A380 business class cabin (with much of the produce coming from New Zealand), and kicked back on the flat-bed seats, he was hard at work on the long-haul flight!

Farm life

Just when I thought I'd got as in-depth as I wanted to when it comes to meat, we were whizzed over to our next stop – the home of Merino sheep. Now, they may be better known around the world for their temperature-regulating wool, but more recently, their meat has become a prized commodity as well, being distributed globally by Silver Fern farms.

Benmore Station, set in the stunning Mackenzie Basin region of the South Island, is one of just a handful of farms producing the unique, premium lamb, one of New Zealand's best kept food secrets. Nestled at the foothills of the southern Alps, this region is wild country at its best – towns are few and far between, the sky is »

definitely bluer (it is also a prime astronomy spot), and the rolling plains overlooked by majestic snow-capped mountains come together to make a serene, postcard-perfect landscape – and the perfect habitat for the Merino lamb to grow healthily and happily.

I felt like I'd walked straight into a *Shadow the sheep dog* book, as I wandered around the pasture on a blustery spring afternoon. Merino lamb grow free-range on the high country slopes, grazing on native herbs such as wild thyme and tussock, and tended to by the kindly farmers and their friendly dogs, usually grow to a mature 18 months to two years, before making it on to the plates of a privileged few. This unique diet and environment – Roy had pointed out to me earlier that only Mediterranean lamb enjoys a similar sort of natural diet – create a meat that is tender and succulent yet not fatty, and deeply flavoursome, as we found out later that evening over dinner at the Omarama station farm-stay.

Richard and Annabelle Subtil run this family-owned farm and open up their home to visitors, allowing a rare glimpse into life in a working farm, while being couched in comfort. The 19th century homestead has been carefully restored to offer luxurious yet homely accommodation, both within the main house as well as in a gorgeous stone cottage on the grounds, equipped with all the mod cons one would need.

After settling into our respective rooms, we gathered round the fireside for a social meal with some of Richard and Annabelle's friends, with Roy, ably assisted by Prabhakaran, taking over the kitchen for the evening. On the menu were mouthwatering Merino lamb chops – simply grilled with a cumin-ginger spice rub – lamb loin with wholegrain mustard, salad and roast potatoes. The chefs also tossed up a quick pasta with pesto and pan-fried salmon, while dessert was a light Kiwi fruit sorbet that Annabelle had made. "The lamb has a lot of flavour," opined Roy, who'd really liked the farm operations. "Even though I did very little with it, it was still juicy. I'd eat it again!" As we lingered over our lovely dinner, washed down by fine New Zealand wines, enjoying the warm hospitality of our friendly hosts, I couldn't have agreed more.

If that evening was memorable, then the view and soundtrack I woke up to the next morning was even more so – a babbling brook that the stone cottage overlooks, was being visited by a family of sheep nibbling at the grass, kept me company as I sipped on my morning cuppa. After a quick visit to a sheep mustering session – where the sheep are brought in to be weighed and checked up on – we hit the road again, this time to go from turf to surf.

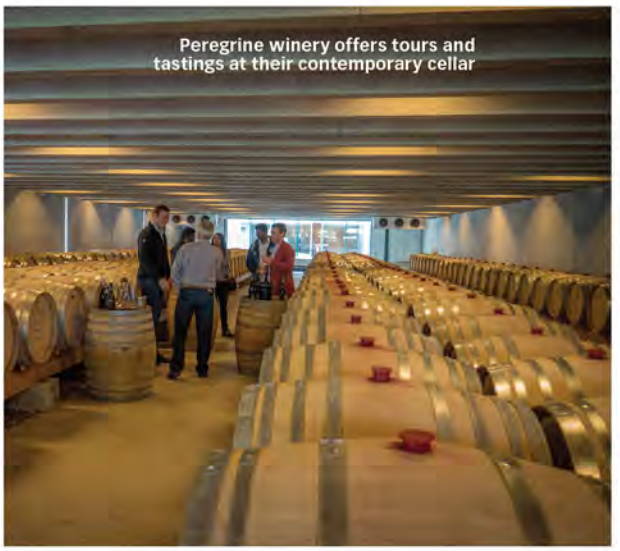




King salmon is as delicious eaten raw as sashimi, as it is cooked



Salmon farming at the foot of Mt Cook



Peregrine winery offers tours and tastings at their contemporary cellar

Fishy adventures

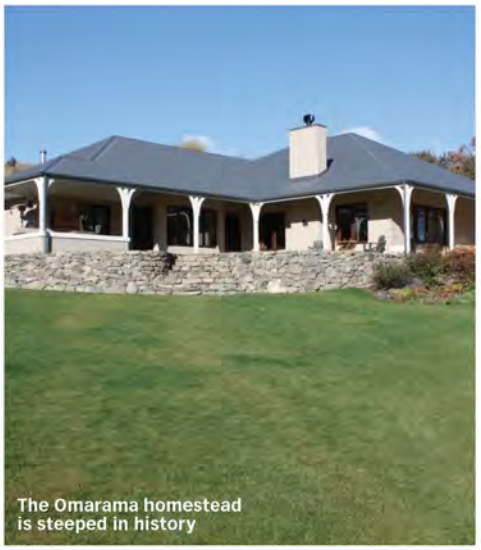
I don't often eat fish for breakfast, but the quaint little café, Wrinkly Rams in Twizel, down the road from the Omarama station, specialised in the seasonal whitebait – it is a small fish only available for two-three months in the year, and widely available in restaurants around New Zealand when in season – so we didn't hesitate to tuck into some. The traditional way to eat it here is in the form of omelettes, which definitely prepared our palates for all the fish we'd be trying later in the day.

Salmon, to be precise. One of only a handful of regions in the world to farm King salmon, this untouched end of the planet, nestled at the foothills of the majestic Mt Cook, New Zealand's highest peak, offers a picturesque setting for the fish to grow. The fish at Mt Cook Alpine Salmon, the world's highest altitude salmon farm, enjoy pure glacial water from the Alps, a chemical- and antibiotic-free hand-fed diet, and high standards of aquaculture to emerge as one of the most delicious ones around – as we found out at our impromptu salmon picnic after the farm tour. Tucking into the delicate, subtly flavoured fish from the back of our cars, Roy wondered out loud about how it would taste in a hot-smoked avatar. Luckily, just then another pack containing the smoked version was whipped out, and the unanimous answer was – it tastes delicious! "It's interesting to see salmon being farmed as fresh water fish," said Roy (these salmon are farmed in hydro canals offering swift currents to offer a healthy habitat for the fish). "They don't taste as 'fishy' as some other salmon, and are also lower in


Felton Road specialises in premium biodynamically farmed wines


Queenstown is a picturesque tourist destination, and an adventure sports hub


New Zealand cheeses and cured meats are the best accompaniments to fine wines


The Omarama homestead is steeped in history

fat. I think they'd be great lightly pan-fried, medium rare."

If I thought that was the freshest fish I'd get to taste, I clearly hadn't seen anything yet, as within a couple of days, I found myself out in the breathtaking surrounds of the Marlborough Sounds (a network of fjords on the northeast tip of the island), on a boat, eating just-caught mussels. But more on that later!

Vintage affair

On this day, we were en route to wash down our fish with some biodynamic wine. This stretch between the two towns of Christchurch and Queenstown is one of the country's prettiest, and therefore, a popular weekend or holiday destination for the locals. The landscape is ever-changing, going from turquoise alpine lakes, green meadows and rolling hills to drier, shrub-filled plains in the space of less than an hour – making it an Instagrammer's delight. It's a good idea to save some camera memory space for Queenstown, however, which is one of the prettiest towns I've ever been in.

We took the scenic route to Queenstown via Felton Road winery, a boutique winery specialising in organic, biodynamic farming. A tour of the vineyards proved to be hugely informative, and even if some of their farming practices might seem a bit unusual – planting and harvesting according to lunar cycles, for example – their natural, minimal-interference approach to wine-making was revelatory. And the proof is in the pudding, or in this case, the pinot noir to be exact, which they specialise in; they also produce a good chardonnay and Reisling. This informal, family-run winery doesn't normally do tours for visitors, but private tours can be booked if you ask nicely. It's worth getting an education before forking out the dollars for their wine, which is truly exceptional.

Another exceptional winery that we visited, also in the central Otago region – one of New Zealand's up-and-coming wine regions, enjoying a continental macro-climate of hot, dry summers and cold winters, thanks to its unique geographic location – is Peregrine. Having won several awards, not just for their wines, but also the architecture – the contemporary winery building is designed to represent a peregrine falcon in flight – Peregrine offers a sophisticated option for visitors to experience New Zealand wine in style. Producing an array of organic wines, Peregrine also specialise in premium Pinot Noir, but they make a fabulous Pinot Gris as well, plus reisling, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc. There's no better way to enjoy their offerings than with a tasting; bespoke tours can vary from a tasting in their stylish modern 'cellar' area, to a full-on tour of the vineyard hosted by a sommelier, followed by tasting of up to eight wines, accompanied by a gourmet 'Viticulturists Platter' lunch – think a selection of local cheeses, pear and fig chutney, quince paste, roasted nectarine chutney, smoked salmon, New Zealand salami and chorizo, and locally made breads.

Clearly not just an authority on food but a wine enthusiast too, Sri Lankan-Australian Roy not only soaked up all the information, asking plentiful questions along the way, but his choice of purchase, an expensive vintage, proved to be something the winemaker personally approved of!

Our consumption of fine Otago wines – and good food – continued that evening at Queenstown's smartest restaurant, Rātā. Helmed by celebrity chef Josh Emett, the restaurant is tucked away in a quiet by-lane away from the tourist town's busier streets. With a daily changing menu representing modern »



The Marlborough Sounds is a spectacular destination, and popular with tourists



Our ride for the visit to the mussel farms, a vintage whaling boat!



Fresh mussels that taste of the ocean!

New Zealand cuisine, the restaurant combines gourmet, Michelin-star worthy food showcasing local produce, in a relaxed yet stylish setting with an industrial-meets-natural vibe. As a table of foodies, we managed to order almost everything on the compact menu – from the smoked warehou croquettes with black sesame and soy mayonnaise; seared Wakanui sirloin with pickled shitake; Moko smoked eel with heirloom beetroot and confit lemon; and rose veal carpaccio with ox tongue, pink onions and smoked oyster cream, to roasted Cervena venison loin with braised cheek, parsnip cream and roast yams; pink fir potatoes with black rye and shallot crumble; and another taste of our favourite Merino lamb with spiced aubergine and broccolini.

Throughout the meal, the professional's critique of the restaurant continued – 'is the butter soft enough, or straight out of the fridge?' 'Should a croquette be coated in béchamel sauce?' – and towards the end, when head chef Chris came out to say hello, little did he know we'd end up having a nearly hour-long conversation about produce sourcing, New Zealand cuisine, and everything in between. But here, the chef rocks up not in a stiff white jacket, but in a t-shirt rather. The menus aren't formal leather binders, but straightforward printouts on thick paper. Little things like this really summed up the New Zealand culture for me – it's low-key, fuss-free, fresh, modern, and genuinely hospitable, with a focus on quality.

Freshness and quality were two things that we found in abundance at our final pit-stop on the trip, on that afore-mentioned mussel farm. Having travelled from Queenstown – stopping over for a quick bungee jump on the way at the world's first bungee spot, as you do! – to the picturesque Marlborough Sounds region, we were about to be taken on a rare trip to a mussel farm.

The chef's enthusiasm was visible the next morning – "I love fishing!" he'd revealed to me on the boat ride – as, while the rest of us staggered out bleary-eyed for a 6am start, he was already conjuring up what he'd like to do with mussels. "Just a few shallots, garlic, tomatoes and a splash of white wine can turn fresh mussels into a beautiful dish," he said.

The drive to the tiny fishing village of Havelock, past dramatically changing landscapes from pine-clad mountains and rolling green valleys to pastoral plains and Hobbit-esque hamlets with names like Woodchester and Rossdale, followed by a bracing boat ride out on the Balaena, a 120-year old whaling boat, watching the mist lift off the glistening ocean as the multitude of fishing boats bobbed about at the pier, was all the waking up we needed however. By the time we reached the mussel harvesting boat anchored in the midst of the spectacular fjords, we were all eyes and ears. This was a first-time experience for all of us, so we were intrigued with how the mussels were farmed on thick, moss-laden ropes to closely resemble their natural habitat (they naturally grow on seaside rocks).

After feasting our eyes, we then treated our palates to these large, fleshy mussels, crudo-style on the boat – simply pluck from the rope, unbeard and slither into mouth, much like oysters! It didn't even need seasoning, with the natural sea salt offering all the flavour needed. We also tried some mussels, lightly steamed, on the boat, and cooked classic-style with white wine and lemon juice later at the pier-side café on our way out, but when they're this fresh, you need do very little with it.

The good news? You can buy these mussels here too, thanks to Omega seafood, who retail these sustainably farmed mussels (and clams) in cleaned, pre-cooked and vacuum-sealed form at your friendly neighbourhood Spinneys or Waitrose supermarket! I tried their clams in a spaghetti vongole, a simple concoction with pasta and white wine, a few days later, and it was one of my most memorable meals.

I have plenty more ideas up my sleeve of what to do with this beautiful seafood, as Roy kept coming up with new ideas and recipes on our journey back. The whole trip seemed to be in equal measures inspiring and enlightening, for both me and him. As he put it, "It's important for us as chefs to get to see this; it's a story to tell, that we get to share with our customers." And the main story here is that in New Zealand, things like provenance, sustainability, and farm-to-table aren't just trendy buzzwords being bandied about – it is the actual way of life. They take a real pride in taking care of their land and sea, their produce; that's how it's always been.

TRAVEL DIARY

GETTING THERE

Emirates offers daily flights to Auckland (and Christchurch) from Dubai on its glamorous A380 aircrafts. The perfect way to travel for a long-haul destination such as this on their business class cabins, featuring flat-bed seats, Bulgari amenities, and gourmet cuisine such as grilled beef steak with truffle jus, sautéed spinach, grilled cherry tomato and roasted garlic potatoes for dinner, and chive scrambled eggs at breakfast, with plenty of snacks to keep you going in between. When you're whiling away the hours enjoying the plethora of on-demand entertainment, socialising at the manned bar for premium passengers on the upper deck, and sleeping it off, the 18-hour flight seems a breeze. Emirates also has dedicated lounges at all key airports in Australia and New Zealand, and complimentary chauffeur drive service at most airports. Ticket prices start from Dhs7,650 for economy, and Dhs23,700 for business class. www.emirates.com.

BLACK BOOK

Here are some of the experiences on our travel trail that even you can experience:

- Omarama station farm-stay: www.omaramastation.co.nz.
- Peregrine winery wine tours: www.peregrinewines.co.nz.
- Rata restaurant, Queenstown: www.ratadining.co.nz.

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Your ready reckoner to: The Dubai Christmas Fest

Festive cookies and treats, Christmas carols, activities for the children, and shopping – experience it all at Dubai Media City Amphitheatre from December 11-13, at the third edition of The Dubai Christmas Fest.

Gear up for the festive season with a visit to The Dubai Christmas Fest, where you can sample festive food, learn tips and tricks on table setting, enjoy classic Christmas tunes, win gift hampers, and even see Santa! Here's a preview of what will be happening at the event.

FUN FOR EVERYONE

• Santa's Grotto
Children can write down their Christmas gift wishlist to Santa, and get a picture taken at the Grotto decorated with M&M chocolate. ***Open daily from 4-10pm, time slots can be booked online in advance.***

• Alladin and Genie's Christmas Adventure
Children can sing along and watch The Arabian Nights characters in a pantomime, where the two characters rescue Santa from the evil wizard. ***On Thursday from 3-3:45pm, Friday and Saturday from 2-2:45pm and 5:05-5:50pm.***

• Giant Christmas Tree lighting
Watch the Chrismtas tree light up every evening at 6pm, near the Entertainment stage – this is guaranteed to be a magical sight!

• Gingerbread House making
It's that time of year when you can indulge in gingerbread all you want, and decorate it too! Bring out the artsy side in you and decorate the house with candy and icing.

• Ice Rink
Adults and children can slip on their skates and make full use of the outdoor ice rink at the festival. There are instructors on hand for novices, so it is absolutely safe.

• Snow fight zone
Get a feel of snow in the desert, and have a snowball fight with family and friends.

SHOPPING

• Festive tableware
Award-winning tableware and furniture brand, Crate and Barrel, is back again this year, with festive inspiration, home décor, and a selection of gift items.

• Christmas market
Shop for gifts for loved ones, or yourself, and find one-of-a-kind brands exhibited in this market corner.

NEW FEATURES

SOME OF THE EXCITING NEW ADDITIONS AT THIS YEAR'S FEST:

Penguin bowling: Little ones and adults can try out this challenging, fun game.

Rodeo Reindeer: Let children enjoy this thrilling mechanical ride to get an adrenaline rush.

Giant magical bouncy castle: Who doesn't love jumping around in a bouncy castle? This giant one is a great opportunity for kids to make new friends too!

Chrsitmas Craft Theatre: You and your children can get creative and make festive t-shirts, or personalised Christmas decorations.



CULINARY OFFERINGS

Tantalise your tastebuds with dishes from an array of restaurants including:

- Anatolia Turkish Grill
- London Fish and Chips
- Pizza Express
- Certo, Radisson Blu Media City
- The Gramercy
- Sumo Sushi and Bento
- The Cheese Cake Factory
- Provedore
- Cioccolat Italiani



NEED TO KNOW Standard advance tickets are Dhs55 per person, and Dhs25 per child. The pantomime ticket is Dhs87.50 per person. The gold adult pass is available for Dhs160 for two adults, and includes fast track entry, two drink vouchers, a mince pie, and Santa's hat, as well as access to all festive features. Visit dubaichristmasfestival.com.

Photographs SUPPLIED

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Dubai World Hospitality Championship

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Your ready reckoner to: Souk Festive Market

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! Especially at the Souk Festive Market at Madinat Jumeirah, which is back this year from December 17-27.

There's no better way to get into the festive spirit this year than at the magical Souk Festive Market at Madinat Jumeirah. Meet Santa and his helpers, while tucking into roasted chestnuts, gingerbread, and festive drinks, at this spectacular outdoor festive market which takes place at the Madinat Jumeirah's amphitheatre every year. A number of festivities will keep both children and adults entertained. Here's a sneak peek at some of the highlights to look forward to.

KIDS ACTIVITIES

• **Giant snow globe:** Little ones can experience what it feels like to be inside a snow globe, and donate money to charity at the same time. Children can decorate their own gingerbread men and stick onto the large gingerbread house in the globe. All revenues will be donated towards Dubai Centre for Special Needs.

• **Visits from Santa Claus:** Who doesn't love meeting Santa? Let your child have a chat with him, and don't pass out on the opportunity to take a great Christmas photo.

• **An ice rink:** Put on your ice skates and head to the outdoor metre ice rink to feel as though you are transported to a winter wonderland.

• **Reindeer rodeo:** Thrilling mechanical rides, like this one, will put a smile on any child's face.

• **The North Pole Train:** Feast your eyes on this gorgeous miniature train display.



COOKING DEMONSTRATION

Planning on cooking with chocolate this festive season?



The Lindt Master Swiss chocolatier will be hosting cooking demonstrations, for everyone to pick up a few tips and tricks. ***From December 17-22.***



FESTIVE FEAST

Treat family and friends to a sit-down alfresco buffet at the Souk Amphitheatre, when visiting the market. You can feast on traditional turkey with stuffing and Brussel sprouts, as well as dim sum, seafood, and dishes from the live cooking stations, at a proper sit-down alfresco lunch. It's not just the food that will put you in a good mood though, as a five-piece band will play festive tunes and create the perfect setting.

On December 25 for Dhs850 for adults, and from Dhs250 for children, complimentary for children under three. Children get access to all the rides when they are booked in for lunch.

NEED TO KNOW: The Souk Festive Market runs from December 17-27, open from 3pm to 12am on weekdays, and until 1am on weekends. Free entry for all. The rides are priced from Dhs10-30, and food and beverages can be purchased at each outlet. Visit www.jumeirah.com for more information.

Photographs SUPPLIED



Visitors got a glimpse of the UAE's rich roots



Arabic handicrats on display at the heritage village



Ladies cooking Chebab a traditional delicacy



Coffee has been a big part of the Emirati hospitality



Fishermen weaving the threads of Emirati heritage



Local Emirati lady preparing Luqaimat a scrumptious Arabic sweet

CHAMPIONS OF CULINARY CULTURE

The Dubai World Hospitality Championship (DWHC) brought together top-notch experts in the hospitality and culinary industry from around the world, in its second edition last month.

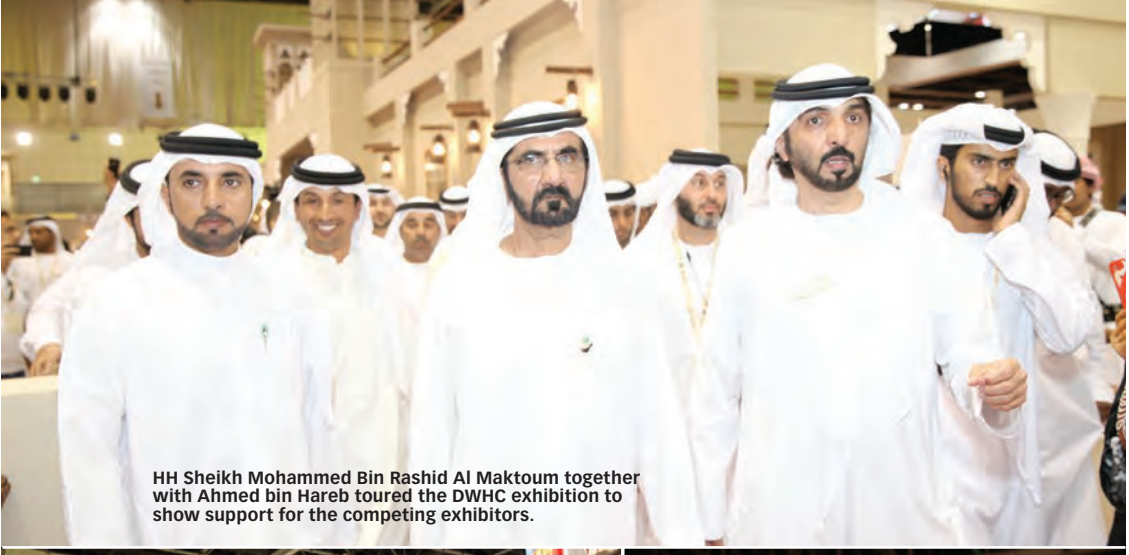
The second edition of the Dubai World Hospitality Championship (DWHC) took place from October 31 to November 1 at the Dubai World Trade Centre, with top chefs and food connoisseurs from around the world showcasing their world-class talents.

The three-day event was held under the directive of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashed Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, and organised by the Za'abeel Palace Hospitality, in cooperation with World Association of Chefs Societies (WACS) and The Emirates Culinary Guild (ECG). Attracting a strong participation from renowned hospitality and culinary professionals – including not just countries in the GCC region but also countries like Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria – this year's championship saw over 2,500 entrants participate in four different competitions: an international competition, Gulf products competition, Emirati competition, and finally a photography competition. The Emirati Team bested other regional and international groups of top chefs to grab the International Competition's top recognition spot.

Ahmed bin Hareb, President of Dubai World Hospitality Championship said, "We are pleased with the outcome of this year's Dubai World Hospitality Championship. It was very inspiring to watch our local, regional and international participants' creativity, innovation, perseverance and sportsmanship as they competed in each category. Their world-class talents and skills in the fields of hospitality and culinary arts are worth noting. DWHC was also successful in terms of showcasing our local traditions to our international guests."

DWHC's second cycle also featured a variety of other categories such as the 'UAE Celebrity Competition', which saw the gathering of world-renowned artists, sports and media celebrities along with professional and amateur chefs to celebrate the UAE's local culinary heritage and hospitality. Participating celebrities were given the title of 'Ambassadors of Hospitality,' in recognition of their efforts to increase international awareness on Emirates heritage and hospitality.

Text by ADELLE GERONIMO | Photographs: ANAS CHERUR; JAY COLINA



HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum together with Ahmed bin Hareb toured the DWHC exhibition to show support for the competing exhibitors.



A welcoming performance for all the participants of DWHC



Ahmed bin Hareb with HH Sheikh Mansour bin Mohammed Al Maktoum during the opening ceremonies of DWHC



Children preformed a traditional Emirati folk dance that highlighted the UAE's culture



Visitors gathered around the Mochilato stand to grab one of these new sensational ice cream



Spectators enjoyed the high energy at the exhibition

THE WINNERS

TRADITIONAL COOKING CATEGORY OF THE EMIRATI COMPETITION:

- **University and College Category** – Umm al-Quwain
- **Women's Associations and Charites team Category** – Dubai
- **Family Category** – Ras al-Khaimah
- **Traditional Kitchens Category** – Dubai
- **Professional Category** – Aisha Saeed Suroor Al Katbi
- **Amateur Category** – Saeeda Mufreh Al Musaferi

DWHC PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION: Abdullah Al Raisi, **Mohammed Al Suwaidi** and **Em-On Gabriel** won the first three places, respectively, in the "Heritage" category. **Baraa' Al Aisawi** triumphed the "Hospitality" Category, followed by **Roger Alfonso** and **Ahmed Al-Khazar** in the second and third places.

CHEFS' CORNER

An array of celebrity chefs from Arabia, ranging from Joe Barza to Manal AlAlem and Mohammad Orfali, livened up the events with demos and workshops









Tasty times

Thousands of visitors enjoyed a jam-packed three days of fresh fare, celebrity chef cooking demonstrations and live music at the inaugural Taste of Abu Dhabi event last month. Here's a flashback of the colourful event.


Live music added to the ambience


A relaxed alfresco atmosphere prevailed throughout the event


Eric Lanlard helps out a young baker


There was no dearth of good food, which everyone enjoyed sampling in taster portions


A fun family day out!


All eyes on the chef at one of the many cooking demos



Reza Mahammad was an absolute delight to watch


Jenny Morris entertains guests at her cooking demonstration

Text RACHAEL PEACOCK | Photographs ANAS CHERUR



Celebrity chefs turned spectators as things heated up at the chef's theatre



A great variety, from fine dining restaurants to food carts, was on offer



Visitors got to participate in hands-on sessions at the cookery school



The talented bands belted out hit after hit



Children enjoyed the activities and games

We're here!





Over 14,500 residents recently swarmed Yas Island as the first Taste of Abu Dhabi fired up between November 6-8. The three-day alfresco food, drink and entertainment festival, which was the first non-music event to take over du Arena, proved popular with visitors who soaked up the casual atmosphere while sampling some of the best cuisine the capital has to offer.

Throughout the festival, 19 restaurants showcased their chops, with each featuring three sample dishes to give visitors a taste of what they offer. Among the restaurants were popular Italian café Carluccio's, gourmet Indian eatery Ushna, masters of mussels Belgian Beer Café and Swiss, German and French fusion restaurant Café D'Alsace.

Over at the Chef's Theatre, international celebrity chefs took the stage, sharing recipes and insider advice with audiences. Master baker Eric Lanlard and British Japanese chef Jun Tanaka were among the big names who prepared dishes before signing autographs and posing for selfies with fans.

Meanwhile, visitors to the Cookery School enjoyed hands-on classes with both local and international chefs, whether it was the executive chef of Flooka showcasing Sayadiyeh, the popular Arabic fish dish, or local chefs from Blue Grill, Avasa and Koi. International celebrities like Jenny Morris and Reza Mahammad also hosted interactive sessions while giving tips.

In between sampling juicy mini burgers and homemade ice cream and trying their hand at preparing five-star cuisine, visitors browsed the array of exhibitor stalls featuring local and imported products, from kitchen equipment to art work.

The jam-packed weekend was sound-tracked by live music from local bands and singers at the Entertainment Stage while the little ones enjoyed an open-air cinema, fancy dress competition, cooking activities and much more.

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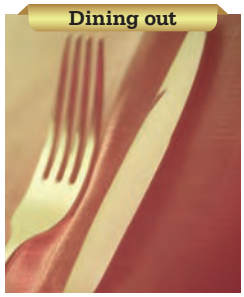
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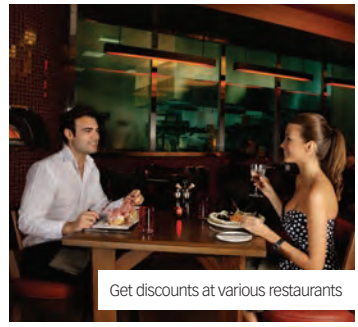
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Competitions

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WIN! WEEKEND BREAK AT HAWTHORN SUITES BY WYNDHAM, WORTH DHS1,500.

If you're looking for a stay-cation, you are in for a treat at this Jumeirah Beach Residence hotel. Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham features spacious rooms and suites with a kitchenette, as well as a health club, swimming pool, and spa. One lucky winner gets a complimentary one-night stay for two, as well as lunch or dinner at Flavours restaurant.

WIN! BRUNCH FOR SIX AT SHO CHO, DUBAI MARINE BEACH RESORT AND SPA, WORTH DHS1,500.

This iconic beachfront spot is one of the grand dames of Dubai's social scene, where you can sink into the large white leather sofas, while taking in the views and enjoying delicious Japanese specialties from the new menu. One winner can take along five friends to this contemporary Japanese restaurant and lounge on a Saturday to enjoy a stylish alfresco outing.





WIN! BRUNCH FOR FIVE AT CRAVIN' CAJUN, NOVOTEL DUBAI AL BARSHA, WORTH DHS1,500.

One person can take four friends along to this brunch, to feast on Southern delights like fried chicken and waffles, Louisiana crab cake, and jambalaya. You can also try a selection of cured meats and cheeses, while enjoying classic tunes from the jazz band.



WIN! TICKETS TO THE DUBAI CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL, WORTH DHS1,400.

20 tickets are up for grabs to this festive event at Dubai Media City Amphitheatre, taking place from December 11-13. Enjoy live entertainment on the main stage, sample food from various restaurants and outlets, eat gingerbread, meet Santa, and shop for gifts for family and friends – it's guaranteed to be a day of fun for everyone! Find out more about the event on p114.

WIN! A BREAD MAKER PLUS FROM LAKELAND, WORTH DHS1,000.

One lucky winner can get their hands on this appliance, which is an essential for every kitchen. The Bread Maker Plus has 12 pre-programmed settings, and allows you to make jams and cakes as well. You can also bake the bread in two loaf sizes, with the type of crust you prefer.





WIN! MEAL FOR TWO AT ANISE, INTERCONTINENTAL DUBAI FESTIVAL CITY, WORTH OVER DHS400.

Take a dining partner along to the Pan-Asian night on Tuesdays, and enjoy a selection of mouthwatering dishes from eight cooking stations. The all-day dining restaurant boasts views of the Dubai Creek and Festival Marina, from the outdoor terrace, and is a great place to relax and indulge in good food. There's an Indian sitar player to add to the ambience as well.

To stand a chance to win these prizes, visit our competitions page on www.bbcgoodfoodme.com, or simply scan this QR code with your mobile to go directly to the website, and answer the simple questions.

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Meet the blogger

Helping you connect to the region's foodie community, one blog post at a time.



HARRY DALY, or Harriet (when she's in trouble!) is a 25-year old of British origin. The Chemistry graduate works as a PR consultant, and lives in Arabian Ranches with her siblings and father, where she enjoys treating her family to her lovely culinary creations. Harry is the kind of girl who enjoys everything from wakeboarding to reading, and of course cooking, and she is up for an adventure anytime.

About the blog

#CAKE **(hashtagcake.me)** was born in the summer of 2013 as I wanted to have something else to focus on, outside of work. I have loved creative writing from a young age, and anyone who knows me will tell you that I am a huge foodie! So, I thought combining two passions might be worth a try. I try to inject my personality into everything I write, as if I am telling the story out loud. It's a food blog inter-weaved with anecdotes, experiences, travels, and food-filled memories. I also have a breakfast series on the blog (The Breakfast Club), to encourage myself to explore spots, and cook breakfast dishes – suggestions are welcome!

SMART BAKING TIPS



Know your oven, and temperature test it with a thermometer. Most ovens run slightly hotter or cooler than they are set to, so getting to grips with how your oven behaves is important!

Use your instinct as well as the recipe. If you feel like the recipe is telling you to put too much of a particular ingredient in, hold back a little and taste it before committing to the whole measure. Similarly, if something has taken 10 minutes less to cook, than the recipe tells you to, take it out of the oven.

A family favourite

Spinach and cream cheese cannelloni. My granddad taught me the recipe when I was younger, and I have loved it ever since.

"My recipe books are full of annotations – it makes them personal to me."

Foodies

I'd love to dine with....

A group of British guys who run a website and YouTube channel called Sorted Food. I find them really engaging and relatable, and I would cook one of my latest discoveries, Jambalaya.

My ideal Christmas gift

Josef and Josef stackable tupperware, and something from Le Creuset – I'm dying to get my hands on the big pot in blue.

This Christmas I'll be eating...

A big roast dinner of red cabbage, goose, and fig pudding at my mum's house on Christmas Eve – it's German tradition to celebrate on Christmas Eve, and both my maternal and paternal side have German family. On Christmas Day at my dad's place, we eat roast turkey and beef, Gordon Ramsay's honey-glazed ham, and trimmings. My step-mother is Canadian so it's a mix of British and Canadian influences on the day.

My ten-minute meal

Probably something involving couscous. I love it, and it takes just five minutes to make. Add feta, fresh coriander, pomegranate, celery, pine nuts, grilled chicken, a squeeze of lemon, a drizzle of olive oil, and it's all done!

Guilty pleasure

Cheese, cheese, and more cheese. Mature cheddar, gorgonzola, creamy brie, fondue, feta – honestly, I don't think there is a cheese I don't like.



Text by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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